Tracking the Shifts of Métèque:
Foreign Identities and Otherness in Contemporary France

Honors Research Thesis

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Introduction

Why *Métèque*?

I discovered the word *métèque* by accident. It was during my first visit to France in 2008, when I discovered George Moustaki's first album *Le Métèque*, in the basement of a consignment shop in Geneva, Switzerland. At the time my French was barely above the level of a *debutant* [I had gone to France to begin to learn French] but there was something about Moustaki's voice and music that immediately caught my interest. The second time I heard the word *métèque*, as it is not exactly a word used everyday in the French lexicon, was when I heard Rocé's album *Identité en Crescendo* in early 2009. By that time, my French was much better, and I was able to immediately draw the connection between the refrain of Moustaki's hit to Rocé's remake. Still at this point I did not see any potential for a research project in the making, rather a simple coincidence of an artist remaking a song by another artist he admired.

The catalyst for my current research wouldn't come until over a year later during the summer of 2010. Having been blessed with a fellowship to improve my language skills by Huntington Bank and the Foreign Language Center at OSU, I spent that summer taking French courses at the Catholic University of Lyon. One weekend, a good friend of mine, Romain, came to visit. Over Saturday evening drinks, I played George Moustaki's hit song *Le Métèque* for him, ironically hoping that he might remember the song from his childhood. Not only did he remember the song vividly, but he also introduced me to Joey Starr's superb remake of the song. At the same time, I had recently purchased Irène Némirovsky's *The Master of Souls* published in 1939, where the word *métèque* plays a prominent role as a label affecting the life of its main character, Dario Asfar. Over the

course of the next year, I began to discover other situations where the word *métèque* was prominently used as a label. For example, it was in a footnote in Irène Némirovsky's *The Master of Souls* that I found a reference to an obscure debate that happened in the French Senate in 1920 on the presence of "*métèques*" living in France. While they were each singular cases, each use of the word that I discovered seemed to be representative of the meaning of *métèque* at the time period in which it was used.

At this point I began to put things together and see that there was maybe something to the word *métèque*. While I didn't see it used outside of music and literature, the prominence and importance accorded to the word in each of these instances began to peak my interest. As a pejorative term for foreigners, it surprised me that the word would not be used more often, and when it did appear, its use was quite calculated. Nevertheless, in the summer of 2010, the problem of immigration seemed to be everywhere in France. Following the fallout of his failed National Debate on French Identity, French President Nicolas Sarkozy began an all out public relations attack on France's Roma population, deporting them in a move seen by many as a way to boost his poll ratings.[1] Out of this climate I began to be interested in the relationship between the word *métèque* and the immigrant populations it has been used to describe.

Derived from the Greek term "metoikos," the word *métèque*'s literal meaning falls somewhere between "one who lives with" and "one who has changed residency" in order to designate the foreign residents that lived in Athens who were neither passing through the city, nor slaves.[2] Yet, even here the question of the definition and placement of *métèques* in ancient Greece has been greatly debated by antiquity scholars. As David

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[1] "France Deports More Roms despite Critics." *RFI* 20 Aug. 2010. Print.
[2] Loraux, Nicole. *Born of the Earth*. Trans. Selina Stewart. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000) 118; Kristeva, Julia. *Étrangers À Nous-mêmes*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2007) 78

Whitehead shows in his book, "The Ideology of the Athenian Metic," in the 18th and 19th century, scholars "saw the Athenian metic as a humiliated being, hounded from pillar to post by a narrow-minded, vindictive citizenry; and metic-status, on this view was a burden to be avoided if at all possible".[3] This viewpoint changed radically when the French antiquity scholar, Michel Clerc published his book *Les Métèques Athéniens* in 1893 seeking to show that they had a "privileged status" in the city.[4] After 296 pages of exposition on the placement of *métèques* in Athenian society, Clerc finally declares that *métèques* "were foreigners, some of a servile origin, others of a free origin, living in Athens, either for a temporary time, or definitively, that Athens made take care of its business, according to them in return strong rights…thus, without being citizens, they [métèques] were an integral part of the city".[5]

Subsequent studies of the word *métèque* have continued this line of thought – that the word was neither pejorative, nor marked Athenian xenophobia or intolerance – despite the fact that its usage in French had strong negative connotations. In 1988, the French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva declared that, "it seems that the institution of *Métèques* was conceived as an simple political and demographic measure, avoiding cosmopolitism and xenophobia".[6] In 2000, the antiquity historian Nicole Loraux, after analysis of the identity of Athenian citizens, concludes that "it was probably better to be an Athenian Metic than an immigrant in 1990s France".[7] And finally, the most recent study of Athenian *métèques,* by historian Saber Mansouri seeks to deconstruct even the

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[3] Whitehead, David. *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic*. Cambridge (Cambridge Philological Society, 1977) 1.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Clerc, M. Les Métèques Athénians: étude sur la condition légale, la situation morale et le rôle social et économique des étrangers domiciliés à Athènes. (Thorin & fils, 1893) 297.
[6] Kristeva 80.
[7] Loraux 128

notion that the *métèques* of Athens were *homo economicus* par excellence, by reconfiguring our understanding of them in terms of their relationship to Athenian politics. In the end, this study attempts to prove that not only did Athenian *métèques* not have to face xenophobia and racism as current immigrants in France do, but also shows that "the foreigners and *métèques* of Athens are not the same foreigners and *métèques* of the National Front and of France in 1990 and 2010".[8] In other words, even though the word had one meaning in Athens, thanks to differences in governments and laws, the *métèques* of France have nothing to do with the foreigners in Athens, even though the same word has been used to label both groups of people.

It is this discrepancy between the word's meaning in Athens and its current French meaning that I am interested in exploring. If the word's meaning was relatively neutral in Athens, then in what specific context does the word *métèque* take such a charged and negative connotation in the twentieth century? When I first discovered the word *métèque* in the lyrics of Moustaki's song, it was clear that the word's power lay in the way in which the context of its usage in the twentieth-century differed significantly than that of its usage in ancient Greece. If one thing appears to be the same between the word's ancient and current signification, it is that nestled within the idea of being a *métèque* lies clues to the perception of the identity of foreigners. Within both contexts, as Nicole Loraux shows, the idea of autochthony, i.e. the idea of being indigenous to a particular land, is key in helping to formulate differences between foreigners and citizens. The Belgian antiquity historian, Marcel Detienne, reformulates this argument when he highlights that often the relationship between the word *métèque* and the idea of Greek

[8] Mansouri, Saber. *Athènes Vue Par Ses Métèques: Ve-IVe Siècles Av. J.-C.* (Paris: Tallandier, 2011) 156.

citizenship, established by the myth that the Athenians were born of the earth, is often confused by the French who compare Greek citizenship with the idea of being *français de souche*, or French by the stump or roots of a tree.[9] As such, one area in which the French version has stayed loyal to the original usage of the word *métèque* is in contrasting it with autochthonous citizenship.

In order to further understand the meaning and today's usage of *métèque*, I will explore the word by looking at four specific contexts of the word's usage. As a word highly charged with negative connotations, the word's utterance is often found within a discussion about the placement of immigrants in contemporary France. By looking at these contexts I will explore how the word *métèque* has been used throughout the twentieth century to express various sentiments and relationships between immigrants and French citizens. This thesis will demonstrate that as a category used to contrast foreigners with autochthonous citizens, tracking the word *métèque* throughout the twentieth century might give us some useful insights into how French relationships to foreigners have changed and evolved over time. Thus, while the word *métèque* forms the common thread that binds each chapter, it is the relationship between citizen and foreigner that is explored in depth.

The first chapter of this thesis explores this relationship by looking at an early utterance of the word in the French Senate in December of 1920. By exploring how the word *métèque* was used to discredit Jewish immigrants moving to France by tying them to notions of a foreign invasion and public health threat, I will show that the currency of labeling these immigrants as *métèques* lied in the way in which it could conjure up

[9] Detienne, Marcel. *L'identité Nationale, Une Énigme*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2010) 28.

negative connotations. These negative connotations of a foreign invasion had particular usefulness in the portrayal of the relationship between foreigners and citizens, by showing how the discourse around the word *métèque* came to denote one's placement within a racial hierarchy of citizenship. By using Foucault's concept of "state racism" I will show how this formation allowed the word *métèque* to take on a highly charged meaning that worked to create strong rhetorical boundaries between the pure French "us" and the dirty "other."

In the second chapter I further this claim that the word *métèque* functioned as a way of demarcating certain conceptions of foreigners by examining the role that the word had as a marker of stigma in Irène Némirovsky's novel *The Master of Souls.* In this chapter, I will propose three readings of the novel and its main character Dario Asfar. The first two readings – one seeing Dario as a tragic character, the other as an anti-Semitic representation of a foreigner – help to point to two different ways in which we can view Dario as a marginalized character. For the final reading, I explore this marginalization by looking specifically at the word *métèque* as a label carrying a certain stigma with it. With reference to the work of Erving Goffman, Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan, I will extrapolate how the word *métèque* functions as a label of stigma, and then look at its consequences for Dario by relating the stigma to Ian Hacking's theory on the Looping Effects of Human Kinds.

In the third and final chapter I explore current, popular usage of the word *métèque* by looking at its use in music. Whereas the previous two chapters dealt with the word's usage amongst new immigrant populations in France, this final chapter explores how French musicians of post-colonial backgrounds have utilized it in order to critique French

cultural production and policies of assimilation and integration. Looking first at George Moustaki's song *Le Métèque*, I will argue that the word's musical usage in the latter half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century differed from the past through its application to French citizens who are nonetheless viewed publicly as being recent immigrants. To do so, I will look at Rocé and Joey Starr's remakes of Moustaki's hit song and the meanings that come out of their usage of the term and Moustaki's music.

As a whole, I hope that my exploration of the meanings and contexts of the word *métèque* will help to shed some light on the formation of French immigration discourses. Since my last trip to France in March of 2011, to complete research for this thesis, the growth of the popularity of Marine Le Pen's National Front has begun to signal how important issues of immigration will be in the presidential election of 2012. With a history of xenophobic and racist reactions to immigrants and citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, the rise of Marine Le Pen – taking the place of her father – seems particularly troubling. At least by exploring the usage of the word *métèque*, I hope to show that maybe the lines constructed between citizens and foreigners are not as clear as we once thought: as Joey Starr said at a concert in 2007, maybe "there is a *métèque* that sleeps in each one of us."[10]

[10] Chachin, Oliver. "JoeyStarr Live à L'Olympia." *RFI*. 19 Feb. 2007. Web. <www.rfimusique.com>.

Chapter 1

L'affaire de la maladie Nº 9: Sickness, Immigrants and Métèque

On Thursday, December 2, 1920, French Senator M. Louis Souilé, in cooperation with the Minister of the Interior suggested postponing his proposed debate on deporting unemployed foreigners back to their countries of origin. More pressing matters lay at hand. M. Gaudin de Villaine, a Senator from la Manche, had a much more timely issue to debate: the threat of immigrants to the public health of Paris. Upon hearing M. Soulié's request, the President of the Senate, Léon Bourgeois, pronounced that the order of the day would go to M. de Villaine to discuss the health of Paris in relation to "the invasion of certain quarters" from, as de Villaine would later state, "métèques of the second order" who were infecting the city with a sickness known as "la maladie Nº 9."

Known today as "l'affaire de la 'maladie Nº 9'" the debate that took place in the Senate that day shows how much xenophobia permeated the public discourse of the French Third Republic directly following World War I. At the same time, this interesting debate seems to have been mostly excised from history books. Other than in the work of Michaël Prazan, very little has been written about *l'affaire* in French or in English. The reasons for this are unknown, and could maybe stem from the fact that often the French Senate is not as closely followed as the National Assembly. Similar to Prazan who discovered the debate in a footnote that mentioned an article in the newspaper *L'Humanité* on "la maladie Nº 9", I discovered it in a footnote to the introduction of Irène Némirovsky's novel *Le Maître des Âmes* [The Master of Souls] which lead me to Prazan's book, *L'écriture génocidaire: l'antisémitisme en style et en discours* [Genocidal writing: anti-Semitism in style and discourse], and finally to an old microfilm at the

Bibliothèque national de France in Paris. While the word *métèque* only occurs twice in the debate, each time the word is used, its presence weighs heavily in the rhetoric of the speaker. As we shall see, its highlights how the word demarcated a line between citizens and non-autochthonous residents that France heavily relied upon, but also acted as a way to racially distinguish the French.

In this chapter I will explore the weight of the word *métèque* in this discourse by performing a close reading of this Senate debate, the purpose of which will be to illuminate how discourses on race were based just as much on biological markers in the years directly following World War I in France, as they are now, even though the usage of specific racial terms might have different meanings today than they did during the post war era. As such, this chapter will focus on one example of how the word métèque came to take on a racial quality in the service of what Michel Foucault has called "State racism". [11] As Foucault showed in his lectures given in 1976, one of the key features of State racism is the credo that "we have to defend society against all the biological threats posed by the other race, the subrace, the counterrace that we are, despite ourselves, bringing into existence".[12] In the discourse surrounding *l'affaire de la maladie N° 9*, we can observe a state dealing with a percieved biological threat that is inherently racially charged through the use of anti-Semitic discourse. While situated in terms of a fear of a public health disaster, as we have seen, the discourse surrounding *la maladie N° 9* was charged with racial terms used to paint a picture of a state under attack. This anti-Semitic discourse used this idea of a racial threat from the outside not only as a means of conjuring fear, but also as a way of affirming French racial discourses, which had already

[11] M. Foucault. *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. (Picador: USA, 2003) 62.
[12] Ibid 62.

taken a noticeable turn towards the surveillance of bodies with the creation of an identity card during the war.

Context of the debate:

Even before World War I, France suffered a serious lack of workers as it expanded its industries. When the war began, this lack was further exacerbated after many citizens were sent to the front lines to fight. In response to a plan by a network of politicians and intellectuals headed by Albert Thomas, France began to recruit foreign workers, and, by 1916, had created an Inter-Ministerial Confederation on Workers, and opened new immigration offices on its borders. By 1918, over 300,000 foreign workers were introduced into French industries.[13] The introduction of these workers was contested and debated as many politicians felt that France should close its borders, and allow French soldiers to retake their place in French industries.[14] Yet the pressure from industries desperately looking for workers finally pushed the Minister of the Interior, Jules Pams, to deliver green cards to border immigration offices on June 19, 1919, allowing miners, construction workers, factory workers and glass workers to enter France.[15] This resulted in an immediate influx of immigrants, notably from Italy, Poland, and Spain, who, as Gérard Noiriel points out, "had the advantage of being Catholic".[16] In an article by the historian titled, "Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race': Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France," the historian Elisa Camiscioli convincingly shows that in addition to their religion, workers

[13] G. Noiriel, *Immigration, Antisémitisme Et Racisme En France*. (Fayard, 2007) 287-292.
[14] P.J. Deschodt and F. Huguenin. *La République Xénophobe, 1917-1939*.(J-C Lattès, 2001) 72.
[15] Ibid 73.
[16] Noiriel 311.

from these three countries were specifically targeted for their race. Recognizing a sudden drop in the birthrate, officials actively recruited these workers believing that they came from cultures that promoted "patriarchal maternal virtue [in other words a drive to produce men], fecundity and traditionalism... the very values pronatalists wished to revive among the French".[17]

Accompanying the arrival of these immigrants was a new effort by the state to keep track of and provide surveillance of these new foreigners in France. In early 1917, the Minister of the Interior, created for the first time in France an identity card, used to track the whereabouts of foreigners in France and to keep them from entering certain areas of the country by explicitly restricting their movement to a limited region.[18] As a report to the President of the Republic in April 1917 stated, surveillance had two main goals: (1) protect "national defense" and (2) "assure that the foreign or colonial worker finds a job in relation to his professional capacities in as little of a delay as possible on French soil".[19] While the identity card was not able to track everyone crossing France's borders, its creation marked a watershed moment for the Republic as the management of immigrants became centralized in the hands of the state. It also allowed the country to keep data on the influx of immigrants into the country, so that by 1920, the year of *l'affaire de la maladie N° 9*, statisticians could show that 201,925 foreigners entered France, while 12,151 foreigners left for a net increase of 189,774 foreigners.[20] The effect of this shift on immigration would allow the state to begin to further legitimize the

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[17] Elisa Camiscioli. "Producing Citizens, Reproducing the 'French Race': Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France." *Gender and History* 13.3 (2001) 595.
[18] Deschodt and Huguenin 20-22
[19] Ibid 21. "Grâce aux dispositions prévues, le travailleur colonial ou étranger est assuré de trouver dans le plus bref délai possible sur le territoire national un emploi en rapport avec ses capacities professionnelles"
[20] Ibid 25.

creation of categories of immigrants between those who were "desirable" and others who were "undesirable."[21]

While France actively recruited workers for its factories, a large increase in the country's Jewish population also occurred at the same time. As Prazan notes, beginning in 1906 until 1930, over 200,000 Jewish immigrants moved to France, notably from Russia and Poland – for a total of about 15 % of the immigrant population.[22] The number of people fleeing religious persecution in Eastern Europe increased significantly in 1924 when the United States decided to close its borders, making France the primary destination for Jewish immigrants that would have usually taken a transatlantic route to North America.[23] As many of these new immigrants began to settle in areas of Paris such as Belleville, Montmartre and le Marais, xenophobic tensions began to increase in the city. For example, autochthonous Jewish citizens of France often denied new immigrants access to sectors such as banking, feeling that the new immigrants might threaten the work they had accomplished as assimilated French *Israélites* during World War I.[24]

In many ways, fears of a xenophobic reaction to the increase of Jewish immigrants entering in France, especially Paris, were increased by the conservative political climate at the time. With a widespread fear of bolshevism following the Russian revolution, the climate of French politics swung to the right in 1919, with the formation of the *Bloc national* in parliament, after Adolphe Carnot successfully united conservative groups such as *l'Action libérale* and the *Fédération républicaine* under the banner of

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[21] In French: "désirables" and "indésirables"
[22] M. Prazan *L'écriture génocidaire": antisémitisme, en style et en discours, de l'Affaire Dreyfus au 11 septembre 2001 (*Calmann-levy, 2004) 76.
[23] Benbassa, Esther. *The Jews of France: a History from Antiquity to the Present*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999) 148.
[24] Ibid 125-127, 148-149.

promoting "economic liberalism, anti-communism, and exacerbated patriotism" in order to present a united front in the upcoming November elections.[25] This shift to the right in France also showed the influence of the anti-republican and highly anti-semitic *l'Action française*, who only received 5% of parliamentary seats under the banner of *l'Union nationale*, and had a strong influence on the right through its newspaper and of its deputy, Léon Daudet.[26] His arrival would mark a dramatic increase in anti-Semitic rhetoric in parliament, and the influence of the *l'Action Française* can be profoundly felt in the discourse of the Senate on December 2, 1920.

The Senate Debate of December 2, 1920[27]

In order to better understand the discourse that took place on December 2, 1920, I would like to divide the debate into three parts, each corresponding to a major shift in the topic of the debate:

(1) The interpellation, or formal questioning to the government, of M. Gaudin de Villaine on immigrants carrying diseases in Paris
(2) M. Francois Albert fears of going over budget in attacking these diseases in Paris
(3) The return to a focus on immigrants by M. Louis Dausset

As the word *métèque* only occurs in the first section of the debate, I will mostly focus on this section. The final section of the debate will be referenced by looking at its relationship to de Villaine's early remarks, especially how the usage of *métèqu*e helps to set the tone for Dausset's interjection that the main focus of the debate is the presence of immigrants on French soil.

[25] Ibid 74-75.
[26] Ibid. 76.
[27] All citations from the speech come from the Journal officiel (JO) of 3 December 1920

The interpellation of M. Gaudin de Villaine

In the introduction of his speech, M. Gaudin de Villaine carefully contextualized his assertion that new immigrants to Paris pose a major health threat to the city by touting his achievements in predicting future conflict as a way to establish his own credibility amongst his colleagues. Thus de Villaine began his speech by asking his colleagues to remember how he predicted postwar tensions between France and Germany during WWI. He then recalled, as proof of his skills in pointing out growing tensions in world powers, that he predicted the United States continued presence in European affairs and the rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Significantly, the impact of each of these claims lay its reference to common fears many French citizens had in relation to French foreign policy efforts; from their post WWI relationship with Germany, to the growing influence of the United States in Europe, to the threat of the Bolsheviks, all of which were influential in the formation of the *National Bloc*. De Villaine's introduction not only sought to establish his credibility, but also couched his subsequent claims in other fears circulating around the Republic and its foreign policy. As a result, when de Villaine finally stated his problem to the Senate, he used geopolitical terminology of an invasion: "the danger for the health of Paris, that stems from the invasion of certain quarters of the capital by thousands of undesirables coming from the Orient."[28]

The crux of de Villaine's speech rested on the fallacious notion that Paris had been "invaded" by thousands of immigrants from Eastern Europe, whose poor sanitary habits posed a major health threat to the capital. The most dangerous of these supposed

[28] "le danger qui résulte, pour la santé de Paris, de *l'invasion* de certains quartiers de la capital par des milliers d'indésirables venus d'Orient." Although de Villaine uses the word "Orient" it seems that he was referring to Eastern Europe in this discourse.

diseases was the recently infamous "maladie Nº 9," perceived to travel with immigrants via rats from their countries of origin. Prazan points out that in reality *la maladie Nº 9* was a euphemism for the plague; and the fear of calling the disease by its real name lead de Villaine, and the newspapers he quotes from, to give this disease a different name.[29] Throughout his speech, de Villaine carefully moved between two problems – the disease and the influx of immigrants – so that often one cannot tell when he was talking about one or the other.

The second half of de Villaine's speech provides a good example of this process. After establishing that he wished to talk about a public health threat, de Villaine began to read an article from the newspaper *Le Petit Bleu*, which described the plague's arrival in France and the infection of Paris through contact with flees and rats. Yet near the end of the article, it seems that the real fear of these immigrants was that they were perceived to bring the intellectual disease of "bolshevism" into the working class of Paris. The second article that de Villaine reads, from *le Rappel*, moved back to the rhetoric of a physical disease by stating that "the invasion of *métèques"* runs the risk of "submerging" areas of Paris and that these "Jews of the Orient" bring with them "all different types of diseases" from leprosy to *la maladie Nº9.*[30] From this point of his speech, until where M. François Albert's interpellation begins, de Villaine decried the influx of Jewish immigrants to Paris.

In addition to its tone, contextualized in fear, de Villaine's word choice in his speech points to his intentions for asking for the floor that day. For a discourse about the health threat that foreigners posed to the French republic, de Villaine surprisingly only

[29] Prazan 82.
[30] JO 1838

says the word "foreigner" ["étranger"] five times during his opening remarks; and often the word is tied to a verb that marks the word foreigner with the idea of an "invasion":

> "…foreigners enter France with extraordinary ease…"
> "…it's the foreigner who has created the big difficulties from the point of view of our national security…"
> "The invasion of foreigners began around 1900…"
> "These foreigners are all Jews, even though they claim to be Polish, Russian and Romanian"
> "…the invasion of popular areas…we should establish a residency tax on foreigners"

As we can see, using the foreign policy fears established in the beginning of his speech, de Villaine gave the word "étranger" a negative feeling by associating it with the idea of a foreign invasion. While any type of invasion would no doubt cause widespread fear, the fact that this invasion was from a multinational group of Jews, as the fourth citation shows, further added worry by drawing on a history of French anti-Semitism and, stoking the anti-Semitic fears of the Senators who lived in the wake of the Dreyfus affair. As Prazan notes, the use of the trope of the Jewish foreigner coming to invade France was meant to tie in with the idea of the "Juif errant" or the myth of a "wandering Jew" taking evil with him wherever he went.[31] The multinational Jewish foreigner that de Villaine decried in his speech, was also meant to be read as an "interior foreigner" (ibid). This idea of the "interior foreigner" based itself on the idea that Jews were a race apart, bound also by their culture and language, who no matter where they lived, were always part of a nation within a nation. In his speech, de Villaine referred to this idea at length when he decries the use of Yiddish [which he called a "universal dialect of Jews" to laughs in the Senate], the construction of synagogues, and the development of "Jewish" quarters in Paris as all part of a plan to establish a nation and "expatriate" the French from their

[31] Prazan 91. It should be noted that "Juif errant" is also referenced in George Moustaki's song "Le métèque." See chapter 4.

home. Thus, in utilizing "étranger" in this way, de Villaine painted Jewish immigrants as a twofold threat: (1) to the health (physical, moral, etc) of the country and (2) to the sovereignty of the country through the threat of establishing a nation within a nation. Throughout the discourse, this specific fear was addressed, as Senators debated the increase use of Yiddish in France, the establishment of Jewish restaurants and schools, all referenced with the word "invasion."

The other terms de Villaine's speech uses instead of "étranger," help display his true feelings about the increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants in Paris. The most used word in place of *étranger* in his speech is that of "indésirable," used five times (just as many times as *étranger*). Just as the word *étranger* was used to tie Jewish immigrants to the idea of an invasion, de Villaine used the word *indésirable* to tie the immigrants to Eastern Europe, describing them as the "undesirables of the Orient".[32] This description of immigrants as undesirable and from the Orient allowed, de Villaine to further establish the idea that these specific immigrants were a threat to the Republic and represented the growth of an unwanted population in France. At the same time, through the contrast of "undesirable" and "desirable" immigrants, de Villaine at least acknowledged France's need for foreign workers, while at the same creating a hierarchy whereby certain immigrants were preferred over others. In organizing this preference around the idea of the "Orient," de Villaine's opening remarks helped to paint the Jewish immigrants as barbarous, tying them neatly to the idea that they were conduits for disease.

However, the strongest term for immigrants in de Villaine's opening remarks is *métèque*. In total, the word only occurs twice in de Villaine's speech, the first time in the middle and again at the end. However, its use punctuates the speech, highlighting how de

[32] JO 1838

Villaine sought to instill a fear of Jewish immigrants, by tying them to the idea of a barbaric invasion, as well as a racial one. Its first use in the speech occurred in an editorial from *Le Rappel* that de Villaine quotes. The article, which explicitly decried these "Juifs d'Orient," outlined how recent immigrants to France brought diseases that the French, recovering from the war, did not have resources to cure. In the beginning of the article, the author states that France has suffered from a "invasion of métèques who risk submerging certain areas of Paris"[33]. Like the usage of the word *étranger* earlier by de Villaine, this article links recent Jewish immigrants to France with fear of a nation within a nation. The word *métèque*, signifying foreigners who lived along side citizens, similar to its ancient Greek origins, immediately takes a negative connotation by the fact that it is linked in the phrase to an "invasion." Further emphasizing this point is the idea that these foreigners will "submerge" areas of Paris, completely taking it over. The power that the word takes in this article derives from its use as a contrast to French citizens, mentioned at the end of the article, who were seen as having to bear the burden of these new immigrants. While France represented one of the premier destinations for immigrants at the time, its preference for certain groups made some weary to those outside of the Italian, Poland, and Spain catholic norm.[34] These ideas of Jewish foreignness, an invasion, and a burden to the French nation gave rise to the feeling that the most dangerous problem that the Jewish immigrants posed to France was to threaten the integrity of the French race. As the author states at the end of the article, "after the ordeal of war, we had the right to live amongst ourselves. This is why this invasion seems

[33] "l'invasion de métèques qui tentait de submerger certains quartiers de Paris."
[34] [34] G. Noiriel, 287-292.

so unreasonable to us" (1838).[35] Thus the word *métèque* in the article points not only to a foreigner coming to live in France, but also to an unwelcome foreigner encroaching upon the peace of the French. As such, the threat was physical, playing into the geopolitical psyche of the French after the war.

The second time that the word *métèque* occurs in the speech, de Villain expands its first usage by emphasizing both the idea of an invasion, and also what it means for the French, making the threat seem almost spiritual:

> French by appearance and tradition, my soul is too merciful to not sympathize with all human misery. But, I am also a French citizen too conscientious and well informed about the social problems of our time to not know that France, for a century, especially for the last fifty years, has suffered too much financially, morally, politically, socially, from the grand amount of Semites arriving and camping amongst us as feudal and conquering foreigners, to not consider this as a large and unjustified ordeal, this degrading and dangerous contact with an invasion of *métèques* of the second order carrying with them, not only anarchism, but also the tragic microbes of Asia; and I will say loud: a number of the French have had enough of being treated like outlaws in their own country – and I am warning them nicely – the Jews have done too much harm.[36]

Like the article from *Le Rapell* that he quoted earlier, de Villaine decried the "invasion" of *métèques* in France by contrasting them to the French. Yet, in this passage, the tone implicitly turns towards a racial threat. De Villain began by pointing to his own national race [Français de face] and culture [de tradition], and then contrasts it with the "conquering" foreigners with whom contact proves to be "degrading" and "dangerous."

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[35] JO 1838. «après l'épreuve de la guerre nous avions le droit de vivre entre nous. C'est pourqoui cette invasion nous semble invraisemblable »

[36] JO 1839-1840 « Français de face et de tradition, j'ai l'âme trop miséricordieuse pour ne pas compatir à toutes les misères humaines. Mais je suis aussi un Français trop conscient et averti des problèmes sociaux de ce temps pour ne pas savoir que la France, depuis un siècle, depuis cinquante ans surtout, a trop souffert financièrement, moralement, politiquement, socialement, du fait des grands sémites arrives et campés chez nous en féodaux et en conquérants étrangers, pour ne pas considérer comme une épreuve suprême et injustifiée le contact dégradant et périlleux de toute une invasion de *métèques* de deuxième zone véhiculant avec eux, non seulement le microbe anarchique, mais encore celui des tragiques razzias asiatiques; et je le dis bien haut: nombre de Français en ont assez d'être traits en outlaws dans leur propre patrie, et – je les en préviens charitablement – les juifs en font trop »

While the danger seems to be at first health based, it also posed a geopolitical threat to the integrity of French sovereignty, since the French "are tired of being treated like outlaws in their own country." As such, the use of *métèque* in this sentence works to further emphasize how Jewish foreignness posed a threat to the racial makeup of France, by imposing a large scale invasion of a race that the French viewed as inferior.

If de Villaine subtly makes this connection in the first section of the debate, M. Leon Dausset explicitly emphasized it in the third section. After taking the floor, Dausset began his speech by chiding the Senate, who had begun to discuss how to pay for sanitation units in Paris, for straying from the real problem of de Villaine's speech: immigrants. At the end of his speech, Dausset outlined that the real reason that the Senate should handle the immigration problem, was because "these large problems" [ces grands problèmes] are intimately linked to "the future of the race" [l'avenir même de la race], a statement for which he received a standing ovation. Dausset's speech, which continued de Villaine's anti-semitic focus on the growth of France's Jewish population, placed a greater emphasis on the idea that these immigrants pose a threat to the French race. For Dausset, this threat had multiple fronts, from France's *laicité* or secularism, to its customs, to the health threat posed by various diseases. While he did not propose any solutions to the problem of unwanted immigrants – asserting instead that questions that de Villaine posed have "such an importance that we will no doubt understand that it is not the last time we will discuss this subject" – Dausset emphasized that these issues were ones that threatened the basic qualities of what it meant to be French and the integrity of the nation. As such, Dausset makes these claims with explicitly racial anti-Semitic terminology, tying the threat of foreigners, to biological issues that the Senate should

tackle. In this speech, Dausset meticulously linked the idea of the threat of foreigners living in France, or *métèques* as de Villaine called them, to an issue of the threat of French integrity that the State must regulate.

Conclusion

The use of the word *métèque* in this discourse by de Villaine, helps to highlight a way in which the word was used in racial anti-Semitic discourses. Within the discourse, two major connotations emerge:

(1) a negative connotation, associated with an invasion
(2) a racial, and highly anti-Semitic, connotation used as a way of distinguishing Jewish immigrants as part of a different racial group than the French, and also as part of a different nation

As a function of its placement in de Villaine's speech, the word *métèque* moves interchangeably between these two connotations. While it denotes a foreigner living in France, the powerful connotations seen in this speech will prove to have strong consequences for those labeled as *métèques*, dictating their place within a racial hierarchy that will affect their placement within France society. As we will see in the next chapter on Irène Némirovsky's novel *Le Maître des Âmes,* the use of the word métèque in the 1930s came to denote both of these meanings, imbedding the word with a strong stigma.

At the same time, the usage of the word *métèque* with both of these connotations shows how a fear of immigrants can have a geopolitical and biological component. While both de Villaine and Dausset emphasized the fear of the French losing some sovereignty in accepting a sizable population of Jewish immigrants, they did so by highlighting the racial differences between the French and Jewish immigrants, not on the basis of their country of origin, but rather on the idea of them being a race a-part and a nation within a

nation. Thus, cultural differences such as language and religion became confused with racial differences, posing a threat as Dausset exclaims to the "future of the [French] race".[37] As Foucault shows, this type of discourse poses geopolitical/biological conflict not "between races, but by a race that is portrayed as the one true race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and [wage battle] against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage".[38] In the case of the rhetoric in *l'affaire de la maladie N° 9*, these *métèque*s were Jewish imigrants from Eastern Europe.

[37] JO 1848
[38] Foucault 61

Chapter 2:

Irène Némirovsky's *The Master of Souls*: Tracking the stigma of being a *Métèque*

Introduction

On the May 18, 1939, the French-Russian Jewish author Irène Némirovsky published the first chapter of her serial novel *Les Échelles du Levant* [The ladders of the Orient] in the weekly newspaper *Gringoire*. The newspaper, which had a circulation of over 540,000 copies, placed Némirovsky's new novel near the front of the paper on page five. Némirovsky, who was known by critics for presenting readers with unsympathetic characters, began her story of a struggling immigrant doctor living in France with a simple line: "I need money".

After her posthumous novel *Suite Française* lifted Némirovsky out of literary obscurity in 2004, interest returned to her other novels, including *Les Échelles du Levant*, which was republished in 2005 as *Le maître des âmes* [The Master of Souls]. As Olivier Philipponant and Patrick Lienhardy point out in the preface, the novel is above all about a *métèque*: Dario Asfar. Even though he is a naturalized citizen of France with a French medical degree, the stigma of being a *métèque* foreigner in France keeps Dario from being able to secure employment. While it may seem at first glance that the reader should feel sympathy for this character locked into a limiting social category, Némirovsky's ability to weave into his tale the themes of greed and vice instead leaves the impression Dario is a sinister character.

In order to show the various ways in which Némirovsky's text might be read, I would like to propose three different readings of the *Masters of Souls*, each one situated within a different historical period. The point of the exercise will be to (1) see the ways in

which criticism of Némirovsky's work has changed over time, and (2) call attention to how she creates dynamic characters that display the stereotypes attached to the social category that they have been assigned. In the final reading I will then make the argument that the power of the label *métèque* in the 1930's lay in the way in which it was used to create a stigma. As we saw in the previous chapter on *l'Affaire de la maladie* Nº 9, the word *métèque* had already been in use for almost twenty years before the publication of the *Master of Souls* as a way to distinguish and discredit Jewish immigrants to France.

First Reading: Dario as a tragic character

The story told in the *Masters of Souls* is a non-traditional tale of rags to riches, set in Nice and Paris sometime early in the twentieth century. The narrative focuses on the life of Dario Asfar, a doctor of Greek/Crimean origin who cannot find work due to his social status, although he possesses a French degree in medicine. He is a *métèque* foreigner. After the birth of his son, and in desperate need of money, Dario begins doing things that cross his personal and professional ethics. First he finds himself performing an illegal abortion on an American prostitute named Elinor. Later he even begins to beg his patients for payments. However, when he discovers that some of his patients want emotional cures, Dario transforms himself into a psychoanalyst, in the vein of Freud, and moves to Paris where he establishes a successful practice. Yet his insatiable greed grows, leading Dario to illegally place one of his patients, an industrialist named Phillip Wardes, into an asylum, so that his new wife, the prositute Elinor, can access his rich assets. By the end of the novel, Dario achieves his goal of becoming rich, but he never gains the full acceptance of French society that he clamors for, nor the acceptance of his son, who views his father's greed as pure vanity.

The first reading that I would like to propose builds off of the tragic nature of Dario's story, a man who gains the world, yet loses his soul. Throughout the novel, Némirovsky gives readers a sympathetic character who nonetheless seems to be motivated by nothing but pure greed. Némirovsky's rendering of Dario's early situation, a man with a child struggling to feed his family in a country that refuses to give him work despite being well educated, gives the reader cause to view him as a tragic character. While his love for his son carries throughout the novel, his love for money always runs a close second in Dario's heart. And as this love often manifests itself through Dario's constant need to keep up with the latest trends of Bourgeois society, he lacks the ability to stay out of debt. The narrator succinctly states that Dario "knew how to acquire money, objects, women, and a reputation. Acquiring, that was not the problem, keeping them was much harder".[39] As such, Dario's debts constantly haunt him, leading him farther and farther into the life of a fake-psychoanalyst, who illegally detains Wardes in order to finance his lavish lifestyle. If the reader was meant to feel sympathy for Dario at the beginning of the novel, by the end s/he is left with a cautionary tale about the love of money, and a character who receives what he deserves.

In fact, this feeling was common throughout Némirovsky's work and many critics in the 1930's saw this as a problem. In 1935, following the publication of her book, *Le Vin de Solitude*, the French journal *La Revue de Presse*, pronounced her book to be a "terrible novel, unnecessary for most readers".[40] In a review that could have been written about *The Master of Souls*, the journal pronounced that "vice, egoism, richness, fill the

[39] Némirovsky, Irène. *Le Maître Des Âmes*. (Paris: Gallimard, 2006) 163.

[40] "Revue De Presse: Les Romans." *Revue De Presse* (15 Nov. 1935) 1312.

book from one end to another." The Review then highlighted this feeling in the rest of Némirovsky's work:

> Madame Irène Némirovsky has great talent, but it's a strange talent. She doesn't feel for her characters any form of pity. She chooses them amongst creatures the most devoid of any moral values, of any human sympathy, and even intelligence of their own interests. She imposes upon them destinies that have nothing tragic within themselves, however, their uncontrolled passions push her characters into the void. They are extremely unhappy people because this world is their only life, material possessions their only ideal, and pleasure their only ambition.[41]

This viewpoint was corroborated a year later by *La Revue de Lectures* on the occasion of Némirovsky's publication of her novel *Jezebel,* when they announced that "every novel by Irène Némirovsky produces the same feeling of depression, of darkness, of distaste, of feeling stuck under the weight of a vice and moral decline".[42] Similarly, in reading *The Master of Souls*, Dario's life seems part cautionary tale, part tragic story of a man who never truly becomes the hero he wishes to be.

Second Reading: Dario the Jew

The second reading I would like to propose of *The Master of Souls*, builds upon recent scholarship on Némirovsky's work that has sought to bring to light how her novels often give readers highly problematic characterizations of Jews in the 1930's. While most American readers are only familiar with her novel *Suite Française*, in France and more recently in the United States, Némirovsky's fame has led many critics to question her motivations as being strongly anti-Semitic, despite being Jewish herself.[43] These critiques mostly begin with her first novel, *David Golder*, and then proceed to follow the

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[41] Ibid 1315

[42] "Revue De Lectures: Les Romans." *Revue De Lectures* (15 July 1936) 790.

[43] Patricia Cohen. "Assessing Author's Jewish Identity." *The New York Times* (26 Apr. 2010: 1-3)

recurrent themes in her novels of Jewish characters plagued by various vices and greed. As Ruth Franklin pointed out, in a review in *The New Republic,* Némirovsky "is a Jewish writer who owed her success in France *entre deux guerres* in no small measure to her ability to pander to the forces of reaction, to the fascist right".[44] Thus, she gave her characters strongly anti-Semitic traits, from portraying them as money-hungry to even giving some of them hooked noses.[45] Even the journal in which *The Masters of Souls* was published in 1939, *Gringoire* was*,* as Tess Lewis points out, famous for it's strong anti-Semitic leanings.[46]

In the novel, there are multiple instances where one can see Dario's character as being problematic. While his love of money seems to be the obvious starting point for any discussion of the anti-Semitic themes in the novel, Némirovsky also subtly draws upon another theme: that of the Jewish magician. As R. Po-chia Hsia outlines in an article titled, "Jews as Magicians in Reformation Germany," the myth of the Jewish magician has a long history in Europe, and manifested itself most widely in Medieval Germany with the blood libel accusations against Jews.[47] As such, the idea that Jews were using Christian blood for their own magical uses had a devastating effect on Germany's Jewish population, leading to a pogrom in 1235, in addition to the constant threat of public executions.[48]

In the same vein, Dario's character seems to recall and build upon this idea of the Jewish magician. First, when Dario moves from being a traditional doctor to a

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[44] Franklin, Ruth. "Scandale Française." *The New Republic* [Washington D.C.] 30 Jan. 2008. Print.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Tess Lewis. "Review: A Cool Head and a Hard Heart: Irène Némirovsky's Fiction." *The Hudson Review* 59.3 (2006: 471-79.) 3.
[47] Hsia, R. P. The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany. (Yale Univ Pr, 1990) 116.
[48] Ibid.

psychoanalyst, people begin to refer to him as a "charlatan" or conman. When Dario becomes more famous, his reputation precedes him as a doctor "who does not cure the body, but rather the soul".[49] This myth, however, can only be sustained through the constant financial backing of Wardes, who devotes everything to Dario, even his soul. This acquisition of a Christian soul by Dario only furthers the anti-Semitic themes that flow throughout the novel. When Wardes later commits suicide, Dario is immediately implicated (yet not charged) for driving Wardes to this extreme, in order to, as the reader finds out, use Wardes as a sacrifice so that Dario's son might have a large inheritance after Dario marries Warde's widow. Much like the idea of blood libel, and the sacrifice of Christians for Jewish uses, the trajectory of the story in *The Master of Souls* presents Dario the foreigner as using the French Christian blood of Wardes for his own selfish purposes, continuing a streak of anti-Semitic sentiment that is found through most of Némirovsky's work.

Also lending credibility to the notion that the representation of Dario's character is an anti-Semitic representation of a Jewish doctor is his last name Asfar. As Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt note in their introduction to *The Master of Souls*, the name Asfar means "voyager" in Arabic, but also points to Ahasvérus, or the wandering Jew.[50] As noted in the previous chapter, this reference to the wandering Jew was meant to immediately conjure up anti-Semitic sentiments as readers might connect Dario with the myth of a Jew who carried evil with him wherever he went.

[49] Némirovsky 158.
[50] Némirovsky 12.

Third Reading: Dario the Métèque

Before beginning the third and final reading I would like to first reflect a little bit on the importance of the previous two readings. I believe that both of them point to an issue that will be key in the formation of the final reading of *The Master of Souls*. Namely, how the reader was meant to understand Dario's character. In the first reading, Dario's tragic story elicits sympathy for his plight, while also producing a sense of revulsion at his extreme levels of greed and vice. In the second reading, Némirovsky gives the reader a character that is supposed to revive their inner anti-Semitic sentiments. In both readings, however, Dario's representation emphasizes the degree to which he functions as a marginalized member of society. Whether the reader experiences sympathy for his character because of this failed dreams, or despise him for the anti-Semitic stereotypes he embodies, he is a figure set off from the other characters in the book and marked socially as the *other*. This marking and the stigma that accompanies it stems partly from Dario's being labeled a *métèque*.

In their formative piece, "Conceptualizing Stigma," sociologists Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan define stigma as a process when "elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them".[51] Moving away from Erving Goffman's early definition of stigma which focused on the "relationship between attribute and stereotype," Link and Phelan instead use the word "label" to highlight the fact that it is "something that is affixed" to a person rather than something inherent, as an attribute might be seen.[52] I would like to build off of their

[51] B.G. Link and J. C. Phelan. "Conceptualizing Stigma." Annual review of Sociology 27 (2001: 363-85) 377.
[52] Goffman, E. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity. (Touchstone, 1986.) 4; Link and Phelan 368

work by focusing on the word *métèque* as a label and the relationship it has to a stereotype: that of the foreigner [the invading foreigner as we saw in the previous chapter] who steals jobs from the French and poses a risk to society.

As we will see in relationship to Dario, the power of the relationship between the label and stereotype of a *métèque* will lie in the way in which it imposes a certain reality upon Dario. The philosopher Ian Hacking further explains this point in his article "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds," which posits that part of the power of human kinds, or the labels and classifications used to distinguish people, is the fact that they inherently contain an "intrinsic moral value," i.e. they come with values attached to them, even if someone does not want to be labeled a certain way.[53] Moreover, through describing human kinds, in other words giving them certain descriptors and thus, values, we prescribe upon them a certain reality, and as the "field of description changes," also a set of actions.[54] For example, Hacking gives the following set of propositions:

> If H is a human kind and A is a person, then calling A H may make us treat A differently, just as calling Z N may make us do something to Z. We may reward or jail, instruct or abduct. But it also makes a difference to A to know that A is an H, precisely because there is so often a moral connotation to a human kind. Perhaps A does not want to be H! .... Even if it does not make a difference to A it makes a difference to how people feel about A – how they relate to A – so that A's social ambience changes.[55]

Ann Stoler further explains this idea when she states that "the power of categories rests in their capacity to impose the realities they only ostensibly describe".[56] As such, in being labeled as a métèque in France, a certain reality was imposed upon Dario, one that he no doubt attempts to avoid, and ultimately fails at escaping.

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[53] Ian Hacking. "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds." *Causal cognition* (1995: 351-83). 352, 367.
[54] Ibid 367-368.
[55] Ibid 368.
[56] Ann L. Stoler. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. (Berkeley: University of California, 2002) 8.

To further understand the relationship between the label of *métèque* and its stereotype one must look at a little bit at the context in which the book was published. As Gérard Noiriel demonstrates in his book *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France*, in response to a general turn to the right in the French press in the 1920's and 1930's coupled with the popularity of Charles Maurras's newspaper *L'Action Française*, an extreme right daily, the word *métèque* was quite popular as a label for all foreigners, but especially Jewish foreigners, when *The Master of Souls* was published.[57] In an article titled, "The Antisemitic Revival in France in the 1930s: The Socioeconomic Dimension Reconsidered," the historian Vicki Caron highlights how an influx of German Jewish refugees in France led to an increase of xenophobic and anti-Semitic reactions amongst the liberal professions, especially medicine. For example, after years of debate, the French parliament enacted the Armbruster law in April of 1933, requiring foreign doctors to fully redo their education – starting with the last year in high school – in order to practice in France.[58] However, the *Confédération des Syndicats Médicaux* [Confederation of Medical Unions] felt that even with this new law the government was not doing enough to protect doctors from the "métèques who come to eat the bread of the French," as one parliamentarian described it, and medical students began to protest across France.[59] Often these protests turned to violence against foreign doctors, with one radical paper describing these protests as having "a pogrom-like atmosphere".[60]

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[57] Noiriel, Gérard. *Immigration, Antisémitisme Et Racisme En France: XIXe-XXe Siècle : Discours Publics, Humiliations Privates*. (Paris: Hachette, 2009) 380-386, 406-407.
[58] Caron, Vicki. "The Antisemitic Revival in France in the 1930s: The Socioeconomic Dimension Reconsidered." *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (1988: 24-73) 46.
[59] Noiriel 407; Caron 41, 47.
[60] Caron 47-48.

No doubt, within this context the word *métèque* was used as a way of labeling foreign doctors who were perceived to be stealing the jobs of French doctors without having their qualifications or experience nor completing a required military service. This usage of *métèque* linked the label to the stereotype that foreign doctors were job stealers, ill trained, and undeserving of positions within France's elite profession. For example, in April 1935, a letter by a Polish doctor titled "Those that we call *métèques*" in the left leaning magazine *Espirit*, praised the magazine for exposing the myth that there are too many foreign doctors in France. The article in *Espirit* also decried the way in which foreign doctors had been portrayed in the media by giving a list of medical achievements by foreign doctors in France.[61] As the title of the letter suggests, the word *métèque* signified the label by which foreign doctors were discriminated against. One magazine, *Le Concours Médical,* by French doctors attempted to give a positive spin on the strikes in April 1935 by stating that they were caused "neither by an invasion of *métèques*, nor racism" but rather by the necessity for "equality of work and rights assured by the law".[62] At same time, the report riles up suspicion of foreign doctors when it counted "1,000 métèques" versus "6,000 doctors" practicing in Paris. In the end, however, this spirit of trying to protect "equality" under the law would convince parliament to pass the Nast law in the summer of 1935, requiring foreign doctors to serve in the military and then wait four years before being eligible to practice medicine – effectively, ending the career of many foreign doctors.[63]

Out of this context one can begin to understand the frustration expressed by Dario Asfar when he states that he cannot get a job. Within the context of the 1930's, he legally

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[61] "Ceux Qu'on Appel Métèques." *Esprit* (May 1935: 325-26) 325
[62] "Nouvelle grève à la faculté." *Le Concours Médical* (April 21, 1935: 1207-1208) 1207.
[63] Caron 49.

could not. While Némirovsky does not make any explicit reference to the Nast law of 1935 or the Armbruster law of 1933, it is clear that Dario's early struggles in the novel are a product of the blatant xenophobia that was common in the years preceding the publishing of *The Master of Souls*. As such, the word *métèque* in the novel signifies the label that leads to his discrimination as a foreign doctor, and acts as a reminder of the xenophobia in France at this time.

In total, the word *métèque* only appears four times in the novel. Yet each utterance of the word highlights Dario's social status and isolation due to the stigma attached to the term. Following the rubric of Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan, who highlight four components of stigma [64]

(1) distinguishing and labeling differences
(2) associating human differences with negative attributes
(3) separating "us" from "them"
(4) status loss and discrimination

I will show how the word *métèque* functions as a marker of a particular stigma in the life of Dario.

The first utterance of the word occurs in the third chapter of the novel, while Dario is still poor, struggling to find patients willing to be treated by a doctor of foreign origin. As the narrator states:

> To be called Levaillant, Massard, or Durand, what a dream! Who would trust him, Dario Asfar, with his looks and accent of a *métèque*? This doctor Levaillant, his neighbor, he knew him. How he envied his grey beard, his down-to-earth personality, his little car, beautiful house….[65]

In being disqualified by his accent and comparing himself to the French doctor, Levaillant, this passage shows the way in which the word *métèque* was used to (1)

[64] Link and Phelan 367-375.
[65] Némirovsky 49.

distinguish and label differences and (2) separate "us" from "them." Acting as an adjective phrase, modifying "looks" and "accent", the word *métèque* highlights certain traits that Dario is perceived to have, traits labeled as *métèque.* In order for these traits to stand out, they are immediately compared in the passage to the French doctor Levaillant, whose name and physical looks mark him as French and therefore socially acceptable. That the idea of "trust" forms the basis through which Dario's stigma disqualifies him as a doctor only serves to further highlight how being labeled a *métèque* had significant consequences for the doctor. Not only does the label point to physical differences between him and the French, but it also points to deeper differences in how one relates to others, distinguishing Dario from other doctors as a *métèque* not to be trusted.

The second utterance of the word *métèque* further shows how word was associated with negative traits that would cause one to question whether or not one could trust a *métèque* doctor. This time, the word is thought by Phillipe Wardes during his first meeting with Dario: "Who had this idea…to go find this little unknown doctor, with the looks and accent of a foreigner, this *métèque* badly dressed and badly shaven".[66] Functioning this time as a noun, Wardes uses the word *métèque* to associate Dario with the negative attribute of those who cannot be trusted. Adding to Wardes' suspicion, Dario's physical looks act to further disqualify him as a doctor. While this first impression soon breaks down as Wardes discovers Dario to be a highly competent doctor, eventually leading to his downfall when he gives Dario his soul, the initial reaction of Wardes to Dario emphasizes how the word *métèque* carried a certain stigma with it. Wardes' shift of opinion on Dario can be seen later in the novel, the third time the word

[66] Ibid 82.

is mentioned when Wardes thinks that "this *métèque,* this unknown wasn't a dishonest man," a belief that would eventually mark his downfall.[67]

The fourth and final utterance of the word *métèque* in the novel might in fact be the most important. Occurring near the end of the second to last chapter of the novel, it's placement shows how important the word was in shaping Dario's life in France as he carried its stigma. In the scene, Dario argues with his son, who feels that his father's greed has destroyed his life. Dario, on the other hand, defends himself on the basis that he needed money for his family. However, his son retorts that he above all hates money, leading Dario to respond:

> Do you understand what you are saying? To starve, like me, with a wife and son on your hands! To be abandoned. To know that you are alone, without anybody to take care of your family if you die, without a parent, without a friend, feared by all, for being a foreigner! When you will have left your first child to die of hunger…when your neighbors treat you like a dirty foreigner, a *métèque*, a conman [charlatan] before you have done anything to merit the title, you can then talk about money and success and understand what it is….[68]

Once again the word *métèque* functions as a noun, yet in being tied to the verb "like" it takes on the quality of an adjective that refers back to the way in which it was used as a label in Dario's life. Here, though, the word points to the amount of status loss and discrimination that Dario faced in his life. As Dario states, the mere label of *métèque* meant that even before he began to work as a doctor, his practice was already disqualified. Link and Phelan state that "when people are labeled, set apart, and linked to undesirable characteristics, a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting and excluding" them.[69] This is the Looping Effect described by Ian Hacking, which prescribes a certain reality upon an individual through the act of labeling them with a

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[67] Ibid 150.
[68] Ibid 275-276.
[69] Ibid 370-371.

certain classification. The categorical power of the word *métèque* lay in how it acted as a disqualifying label for Dario, marking him as the other, tying him to negative stereotypes and attributes and restricting his possible modes of action. Thus, the act of becoming a psychoanalyst, while portrayed in deeply anti-Semitic tones, nonetheless was the profession that Dario's character was forced into as a result of being a *métèque*. Barred from practicing medicine due to an increase of xenophobia, Dario instead became the magician society wanted him to be, thereby allowing him to practice "medicine" while at the same time corroborating the label of "conman" and "métèque" that had been attributed to him. What Erving Goffman would call the "management of Dario's spoiled identity," cause by the stigma of being a *métèque*, seriously curtailed the range of actions available to Dario.

For Dario, who spent his life trying to escape the stigma of being a *métèque*, managing his identity became one and the same with dealing with the label of a *métèque*. As he tells his son at the end of the chapter, "I once believed that I wasn't the same race as my father, but another, infinitely superior. You have taught me the contrary. These are questions that only time can help to resolve".[70] Dario's story in the novel highlights the power that labels such as *métèque* can have in shaping one's life possibilities. In trying to escape the label, Dario in fact seemed to aggravate the stereotype. While he does achieve his goal of becoming rich, he does so in a way that only accentuates the feeling that he is the *métèque* and conman that he worked so hard not to be. As such, the stigma of being a *métèque* takes on a primordial function in his life, accompanying him throughout his career as a doctor living in France.

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[70] Ibid 276.

Conclusion

In reading *The Master of Souls* it is hard not to feel conflicted about how to understand Dario's character. Dario's plight earlier in the book makes the reader sympathetic to his motivation to provide for his family, yet his greed soon triggers anti-Semitic stereotypes for which Némirovsky was quite famous. However, maybe the key to understanding Dario's character lies in recognizing the role that the word *métèque* has on his life in creating a stigma. Némirovsky's novel does present us with an unsympathetic character that was obviously meant to revive the anti-Semitic fears of the readership of *Gringoire*, and her presentation of Dario as a character locked into a social category paints an accurate picture of the way in which the word *métèque* was perceived at the time. This usage of *métèque*, which linked foreigners to stereotypes of a distasteful physical appearance, distrustfulness, and greed, helps to explain the reason why it might have been popular in discussions of foreign doctors. Like its usage in *l'affaire de la maladie Nº 9*, the word's usage at this time worked to isolate foreigners from citizens, through rhetoric that highlighted a fear of the *other*. As such, in Némirovsky's novel, the word *métèque* marks a certain stigma, and the limits this stigma created for those who were labeled *métèques* in the 1930's. As we shall see in the next chapter, while the word *métèque* still kept some of it stigma, in the later half of the twentieth century musicians would transform its meaning in order to make strong political statements about the status of immigrant populations in France.

Chapter 3:

Avec Ma Gueule de Métèque:
The evolution of *chanson* in relation to its métèque artists

In a groundbreaking article titled, "La chanson française un art de métèques" the historian Yves Borowice traces the foreign influences that underline the backgrounds of the artists that have made up the "pantheon" of the French genre of *chanson*.[71] While recognizing the place that the genre has had in the construction of Frenchness, Borowice nonetheless ironizes on the role that non-autochthone citizens have played in building "the legacy of french *chanson*" [*le patrimonie chansonnier français*] by constructing a chart on the foreign backgrounds of well over two hundred artists considered to be at the top of a genre often viewed as strictly for the French.[72] In utilizing the word *métèque* to describe these artists that have given a significant contribution to the genre, Borowice at once evokes the stigmatization that word carries as a descriptor for foreigners, at the same time that he calls attention to a way in which these artists foreign pasts have been forgotten in the discourse of *chanson*. As a result, his analysis not only seems to stoke the fears of nationalists, who often proclaim the purity of the "heritage" French cultural production, but also questions whether such a purity ever really existed in the first place within French *chanson*. In order to make this claim, Borowice highlights various levels of "*métèquitudes,*" from artists with parents of foreign European origin assumed to be French, to those whose perception of "Frenchness" is constantly questioned by society's

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[71] Y. Borowice. "La chanson française, un art de métèques? Première partie: Vision panoramique." *Amnis: Revue de civilisation contemporaine Europes/Amériques*.7 (2007) 1.
[72] Ibid 2.

collective vision of what a French citizen should look like, for example those of Caribbean or African origin.[73] And then, at the end of his article he concludes that:

> We will have understood that an art as popular as that of *chanson*, welcoming to *métèques* of all backgrounds, mostly since it is often downplayed as a "minor art" or "mass culture", has without a doubt a lot to teach us on the history, memory and representation of immigration. What lines of force will break from this mix of words, music, bodies, and voices?[74]

In this chapter, I would like build off of the work that Borowice begun and explore the use of the word *métèque* in *chanson* since the Second World War. This analysis will focus on a close reading of George Moustaki's 1969 song *Le Métèque*, and two recent remixes of the song by the Hip Hop artists Joey Starr and Rocé. However, before moving into my analysis of the three songs I would like to begin by going through a short history of the genre, and the myths surrounding it by exploring the "language" used to describe its relationship Frenchness.[75] This exploration will show how the myth of chanson also plays a role in the categorization of *chansonniers* of foreign origin, leading to a sort of dual identity where artists must downplay their origins in order to participate in the genre's production. This process of minimalizing the non-autochthone nature of *chanson* artists will continue until Moustaki's song "Le Métèque" will critically question the genre's basic assumptions.

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[73] Ibid 6.
[74] "On l'aura compris, un art aussi populaire que celui de la chanson, accueillant aux métèques de toutes espèces sans doute parce qu'il est souvent rétrogradé des "arts mineurs" ou de la "culture de masse", a sans doute beaucoup à nous apprendre sur l'histoire, la mémoire et la représentation de l'immigration. Quelles lignes de force dégager de cette foule de mots, de musiques, de corps et de voix"
[75] I owe a lot of thanks to the dissertation of Adeline Cordier for her work exploring Brel, Brassens and Ferré in forming my argument on the myth of the French *chanson* artist.

Creating a Chansonnier

As Dietmar Rieger points out, when studying the history of *chanson*, one must always begin by pointing towards the tradition of lyrical poetry established by the Troubadours in medieval France.[76] Indeed, it is from the Troubadourian tradition of singing that histories of *chanson* often begin their analysis of the genre's long linear development into its popular contemporary form as something strictly "French". For example, French linguist Louis-Jean Calvet, begins his study of contemporary *chanson* in 1974, by establishing the differences between French song and the traditions of other countries through declaring that French song began in 1000 A.D. with the troubadours located in France.[77] The use of the Troubadours to begin the history of French *chanson* serves a double function of first giving the genre of genealogical line from which it can self-reference, at the same time that it helps to legitimate the genre as historically formed. It is clear, however, that today's contemporary *chanson* has very little to do with the troubadours' song of the past. Yet as Calvet shows, the history of genre often follows a linear line from the Troubadours to other medieval singing poets, to political songs such as *La Marseillaise*, to cabarets at the turn of the 19th century, up until musical halls, Charles Tenet, and the phenomenon of Edith Piaf after World War II.

But what exactly is *chanson* today? David Loosely points out that finding an exact definition of *chanson* is somewhat difficult due to the ways in which the definition of the genre constantly shifts in relation to a host of "cultural assumptions about what

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[76] D. Rieger. "La poésie des Troubadours et des Trouvères comme chanson littéraire du moyen age." *La chanson française et son histoire.* Ed. D. Rieger.Gunter Narr Verlag, (1988). 1.
[77] Louis Jean Calvet. *La Chanson française aujourd'hui.* (Paris: Hachette, 1974) 3.

French song *ought* to be".[78] Often chanson is characterized by its simple use of instruments, theater like style of singing and "poetical" lyrics. Yet to truly find a definition of French *chanson* one must look towards the thing it is not – and as has been the case since the end of World War II, this opposition has usually been towards the influence of Anglo-Saxon pop music. Yet even here, drawing a simple line in the sand between *chanson* and other *varieties françaises* proves to be difficult due to the seeping influence that Rock & Roll has had on artists in *la nouvelle chanson* such as Francis Cabrel and Renaud, to cite two recent artists considered to be *chansonniers* who also display the influence of Anglo-Saxon music styles. Thus the product of this opposition in Loosely's analysis is a splintered and somewhat fluid definition of the genre in terms of musicality that however bases its claims on other cultural notions of "legitimacy" of the artists who make up its ranks.[79]

In her doctoral dissertation on "The Mediating of *chanson*: French identity and the myth Brel-Brassens-Ferré" Adeline Cordier outlines how the lines which define the genre of *chanson* [especially when tied to the myths of Brel-Brassens-Ferré] is a "media construction which has provided French society with a tangible symbol upon which to project notions and ideals that it associates with its cultural identity".[80] As such, she outlines a list of notions and ideals that were essential to producing the idea of the Frenchness of these three artists which gave them the quality of being *chansonniers*: (1) authenticity, (2) poetry, (3) romanticism, (4) revolt and nonconformity, and (5) adventure. While her analysis focused mostly on the trio of Brel-Brassens-Ferré, she

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[78] D. Loosely. "In the Margins: chanson, pop, and cultural legitimacy." *Popular music in France from chanson to techno: culture, identity, and society.* Eds. S. Cannon and H. Dauncey. (Ashgate Pub Ltd, 2003) 28.
[79] Ibid 35.
[80] A. Cordier. "The mediating of chanson: French identity and the myth Brel-Brassens-Ferré." (2008). 179.

notes that the same notions and ideals are tied to other *chanson* artists and it is their operation within the relationship between the media and the public that gives the artists the traits of being practitioners of this strictly French genre.[81] No doubt this game between the myth of the artists and reality lead to certain contradictions in their media perception. . For example, Brassens continued to be seen as having *une mauvaise reputation* [a bad reputation] despite the fact that he won the *Grand Prix de poésie* from the *Academy française* in 1966, and has been widely studied in literature courses across France. Perhaps the myth of Brassens could only be sustained through what the social critic and semiotician Roland Barthes would have called the "metalanguage" established around how a French *chansonnier* "ought to look."[82] Thus the genre of *chanson* is just as much about the myth of the artists who make up its repertoire as it is about the style of music within its repertoire – which borrows from a whole host of sources – and this mythology helps explain how artists with styles as different as Brel and Brassens could fall under the same category of music with other artists such as Renaud and Maxine le Forestier.

One can imagine that operating within the framework of the genre of *chanson* can be quite conflicting for an artist of foreign origin in France. If "mythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication" as Barthes posited, then the onus to represent oneself in harmony with the materials of *chanson* rested on the shoulders of the non-autochthone artist.[83] Borowice's study of these "métèque" artists suggests that often their success required a collective forgetting of their past, and minimizing of their origins in order to seem more

[81] Ibid 181-184.
[82] R. Barthe. "Mythologies." (1972). 115.
[83] Ibid 110.

French. In an anecdote about Brassens, who is of Italian origin, Borowice points out that the singer rarely spoke about his origins even though he saw it as a major influence in his musical career.[84] For those who, according to phenotype, are considered to be a *métèque* by dint of their relationship to what is assumed to be French, this game becomes a lot more tricky and can lead to interesting consequences. Two examples of this will help to illustrate this point.

The first example is that of Enrico Macias [originally Gaston Ghrenassia] of Jewish Algerian origin, who has come to be known as "le pied noir de la chanson" [the *pied noir* of *chanson*], even though he was not a true French *pied noir*. [85] A teacher in Algeria before he immigrated to France with the other "pied noirs" in the 1960's during the Algerian war, Macias first became known with his hit song *J'ai quitté mon pays* [I've left my country], written while he immigrated on a boat to Marseille.[86] One night Macias won the chance to sing the song on television and became an overnight sensation with his song of longing for his home country, an event that marked the beginning of what would be called "pied-noir chanson".[87] While the arrival of Macias into the world of chanson would seem to mark the beginnings of a shift in the definition of *chansonniers* away from a strict definition of pure "Frenchness" – at least on a visible level – he was nonetheless appropriated in an interesting way.

Cordier in her dissertation on Brel-Brassens-Ferré highlights that each *chansonnier* must have a political signification in order to be a true artist of *chanson*, however this political signification must be superficial. Thus the values attached to each

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[84] Borowice 2.
[85] C. Brunschwig, L. J. Calvet, and J. C. Klein. "100 ans de chanson française." (1972): 228.
[86] Véronique Mortaigne. "Enrico Macias En Chanteur Intercommunautaire." *Le Monde* (17 Mar. 2011)
[87] Calvet 54.

artist in *chanson* must be "expressed through images or ideas – or *concepts*, to refer back to Barthes's terminology – that are never developed fully, and which, therefore, can be adapted, interpreted, and appropriated".[88] In the case of Enrico Macias, these images were tied directly to France's feelings of loss in the Algerian war, and the collective trauma brought upon the country with the arrival of the pied-noirs, as an embodied 'return of the repressed.' Barbara Lebrun notes this in her brief overview of the significance of Macias for the French in the 1960's in her book on *Protest Music in France*:

> …Enrico Macias, born in 1938 in Constatine (Algeria) would provide early examples of a *métissage* between French lyrics and evocations of North Africa His songs, however, mostly lamented the uprootings of Algerian colonists, and enthused about fraternity beyond racial divides, two themes that guaranteed his success among the large *pied-noir* community, and more generally among a French audience nostalgic for the loss of Algeria as a French possession, or indifferent to questions of the moral status of colonialism.[89]

Thus the political significance attached to Macias as an artist worked by superficially casting him as the singer sent to soothe the wounds of France's colonial loss. In order for this movement to take place, the lyrics of his songs had to be elevated to level of poetry (one of the values Cordier highlights in the creation of a *chanson* artists), especially those that praised France, such as *Paris, tu m'as pris dans tes bras* [Paris, you have taken me in your arms], while glossing over the strong North African musical styles that infused his work, a product of the influence of his father-in-law, the guitarist Cheikh Raymond.

Macias' experience with chanson, however, was not unique. As Borowice testifies in his article, for many artists of non-autochthone backgrounds, a complex "*métèque"* relationship with France necessarily developed as they tried to establish themselves as

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[88] Cordier 234.
[89] B. Lebrun. *Protest music in France: production, identity and audiences.* (Ashgate Pub Co, 2009) 75.

artists of *chanson*.[90] While Macias could be appropriated into the discourse of French *chanson* through his relation to other *pied-noirs*, who at were not warmly welcomed by the French, despite being a Jewish Algerian, the incorporation of other artists was less smooth, and their fit into the mold of "Frenchness" required by the genre, more troublesome. One example that Borowice cites is that of Henri Salvador, whose lyrics for his song "Faut Rigoler" (1960) oddly praises "nos ancetres Gaulois" [our Gaulois ancestors] despite being of black Caribbean origin; leading Borowice to question "should we read in Salvador a polite hopelessness comparable to that of Louis Armstrong, hiding behind his smiles of the 'good negro,' in order to better sell his music to whites?"[91] As we have seen, while the genre of *chanson* transformed each artist to neatly fit into a myth of what a French artist *ought* to be like, for artists of non-autochthonous backgrounds, this process was especially tenuous. It is out of this context that George Moustaki's song "le Métèque" would enter the *chanson* scene and openly challenge what it meant to be a *chanson* artist.

Creating a Classic: Moustaki entrance as a solo-artist

Before he became famous in France as a chansonnier, Moustaki had already gained respect in the world of *chanson* as a composer and lyricist. Indeed, having written the hit song "Milord" for Edith Piaf, Moustaki was already at the top of the world of *chanson*. The experience no doubt helped to establish Moustaki as a master lyricist, and by the late-1960's Moustaki had entered into a "semi-retirement".[92] Then May 1968

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[90] Borowice 6-11.
[91] ibid 9-11. "faut-il lire la politesse d'un désespoir comparable à celui que Louis Armstrong cachait derrière ses grimaces de 'bon nègre', pour mieux imposer sa musique aux Blancs?"
[92] Calvet, Louis-Jean. *Georges Moustaki: La Ballade Du Métèque*. (Paris: Fayard, 2004) 152.

happened. Feeling that artists should show solidarity, Moustaki joined with the striking workers at the Citroën factory in order to show his support of the movement. Performing alone without a microphone, Moustaki's actions forced him out of his retirement and back onto a stage, and soon he began to sing at other factories, at la Sorbonne, and in front of groups of Portuguese and Arab immigrants. [93] While Moustaki was engaged politically by singing in solidarity movements, the lyrics of his songs written at this time, however, reflect very little of his political engagement, as Jean Louis Calvet outlines in his biography.[94] Instead Moustaki, took a much more subtle approach to politics in his songs, preferring to breach the subject through his personal origins as a Jewish Greek Egyptian. As Calvet states, "in fact, for him politics is and could only be a personal affair." [95]

Out of this subtlety emerged Moustaki's most famous song to date, *Le Métèque.* Written at first for Pia Colombo, the song's lack of success in her voice led Moustaki to pick up the song himself. Yet in no way was Moustaki enthusiastic about singing the song. Although he was described as having felt lazy on the day that he was scheduled to perform the song on Denise Glasser's influential television show *Discorama*, his girlfriend, luckily, urged Moustaki, to go on the show. Overnight, "le Métèque" became a hit, taking first place on the top hit list on the 25th of January 1969, and staying at the top of the chart for over seventy weeks.[96] For the old lyricist of Edith Piaf, who still did not have full French papers at the time, the rise to the top of the *chanson* charts marked a true *bouleversement* or upheaval in the genre. Not only did the song re-introduce the word

[93] Ibid 159-161
[94] Ibid 167.
[95] Ibid 165. "en fait, la politique pour lui est et ne peut être qu'une affaire personnelle"
[96] Ibid 178.

métèque into the popular consciences of the general public, but it did so through the voice of an artist considered to be a *métèque* himself. Rather than playing into the genre of *chanson* by performing a Frenchness that he no could not fit comfortably, Moustaki instead presented a song that described him as he was, a *métèque* of Jewish Greek origins. The effect of the song on French *chanson* was huge. For example, the chanson encyclopedia *100 ans de chanson*, published in 1972, three years after Moustaki's song first entered the scene, described it as follows:

> 100 ans de *chanson* "George Moustaki has made a decisive entrance into the world of artists with 'le Métèque' that took hold of the hit-parade for two years straight. In the studios that we left, we pulled our hair: what has happened? Simply, Moustaki stopped being a songwriter for others, and instead introduced his own personality on his own record, with a cheerful smile and an unkempt beard. A *métèque*? Definitively. But a wandering Jew and Greek shepherd that doesn't scare anyone, it's all in a good tradition. And then he has blue eyes, and is exactly of age to seduce audiences, and he also speaks such good French...[97]

As the above passage notes, at the time of the song's introduction into the world of *chanson*, no one really knew what to do with it, or with Moustaki. It was clear that in many ways his song fit the ideal of what would generally be considered to be *chanson*; its style was not too far away from other *chanson* songs, nor was it too close to the loathed Anglo-Saxon rock. Its lyrics had a poetic quality that recalled the great trio of the genre, Brel-Brassens-Ferré, and no doubt Moustaki was well aware of what a good *chanson* needed having hidden behind Edith Piaf, Barbara, and Serge Reggiani as a lyricist for years. And yet there he was, Moustaki, a Jewish-Greek-Egyptian singing a *chanson* about *métèques*, "and he speaks such good French."

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[97] 100 ans de *chanson « Chanson, par. et mus. Georges Moustaki (1969)….fait une entrée decisive dans le monde des interpretes avec le Métèque qui tient sans discontinuer le hit-parade pendant deux ans. Dans la maison de disques qu'il vient de quitter, on s'arrache les cheveux: que s'est-il donc passé? Simplement, Moustaki a cessé d'être celui qui composait pour les autres, et impose sa proper image: sur le disque, un sourire heureux et une barbe hirsute. Un métèque? Soit. Mais un "juif errant", un "pâtre grec", ça n'effraie pas, c'est dans la bonne tradition. Et puis il a les yeux bleus, l'âge ideal pour seduire, et il parle un si bon français »*

Accompanying the arrival of Moustaki onto the scene of *chanson* were the lyrics to *le Métèque*, lyrics that not only announced his presence, but also sought to establish his place as a *chanssonier*. Beginning with the line "with my big ass mouth of a *métèque"* ["avec ma gueule de métèque"] Moustaki's song breaks with the tradition of *chanson* and proudly proclaims his foreign identity. If Enrico Macias was appropriated into *chanson* in order to soothe France's post-colonial blues with his song *J'ai quitté mon pays* [I have left my country] and Henri Salvador, despite being of black Caribbean origin, could enter into *chanson* through claiming "our Gaul ancestors" ["nos ancetres Gaulois], than with his politically *in*-correct beginning Moustaki announced his break with the traditional rules of *chanson française*. Instead of fitting neatly within the myths of the strictly French genre, Moustaki instead proudly pronounces his lineage at the beginning of each verse in the song:

> With my big ass mouth of a *métèque,*
> Of a wandering Jew, of a Greek Shephard
> [*Avec ma gueule de métèque*
> *De Juif errant, de pâtre grec*]

In his analysis of this part of the song, Jean-Louis Calvet identifies the significance of the word *métèque* as playing "a game of mirrors between two racisms"– the word's original meaning in Athens, and its recent meaning in contemporary France especially since Charles Maurras.[98] As Calvet sees it, in the wake of the '68 protests, where students announced their defense of the French-German student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit by pronouncing that "we are all Jewish Germans," Moustaki's own admission of being *métèque* allowed him to find a favorable audience amongst French listeners at the time.[99] Then comes the "wandering Jew*,"* which Calvet ties to various myths that have emerged

[98] Calvet *Moustaki* 179.
[99] "nous sommes tous de Juifs allemands"

since the 18th century of Jews who having insulted Christ, must live constantly on the road. And finally, with the "Greek Shephard" Calvet pronounces that Moustaki in the writing of his song links a "trilogy" that ties the song to three major issues of racism in France.[100] However, for Calvet it's difficult to understand exactly how and why the song became a big hit in France and promoted Moustaki into a fitting and yet somewhat ill-fitting career as a *chansonnier*, especially giving its subject matter.[101] Nonetheless, the song had a strong effect on the perception of the word *métèque,* making it "plus acceptable, présentable" [more acceptable, presentable].[102]

Yet, if it is often the mark of Moustaki's songs to attempt to approach political issues through his own personal life, then maybe part of the reason for the success of the song is the way in which he was able to take an issue of race and personalize it in such a way that opened up the door for the French to feel *métèque.* Though written in a familiar key of A major, its use multiple of guitars coupled with poetic lyrics make it seem lyrically French and while having a musically Mediterranean feel at the same time – familiar and yet foreign. In an interview granted to France 1 in March 1970, Moustaki describes the universal nature that he envisioned the song taking:

> "I wrote this song because from time to time, like everyone, I feel very *métèque*. I feel little integrated, and I wanted to write this song in a similar manner, like an affirmation, of this feeling of being *métèque*, as if it was a song of love vis-à-vis the women with whom I am talking".[103]

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[100] Ibid 179-180.
[101] Ibid 182.
[102] Ibid 183.
[103] *Journal 20H*. France 1. Paris, France, 3 Jan. 1970. Television.
« J'ai écrit cette chanson parce que des temps en temps, comme tout le monde d'ailleurs, je me sens très métèque. Je me sens très peu intégré et j'ai envie de faire cette chanson comme une manière d'affirmer cet eh, ce sentiment d'être métèque, vis-à-vis comme si c'était un chanson d'amour vis-à-vis la femme dont je parle »

Out of this might come the greatest significance of Moustaki's entrance into the world of *chanson*: for not only did he refuse to buy into a pre-figured idea of what a French *chansonnier* ought to be, but he also embraces his *mal à l'aise* place within the genre, affirming his place as a *métèque*.

This has specific significance in relation to failed Third Republic French assimilation policies that often tried to erase ethnic differences in the name of creating a common French identity, at least rhetorically. Lynn E. Palermo points out that the assimilationist project of the Third Republic sought to create "a single identity for the ethnically diverse people within each colony, and, eventually, a common 'French' identity for all colonies, based on the same values that had operated to forge the diverse peoples of metropolitan France into a single nation" (296)[104]. The failure of this project vis-à-vis the colonies no doubt later left scars for the French; but as Palermo shows through her study of the *Exposition Universelle* of 1899, at the time, the problem with questioning the colonial project was that it was intrinsically laced with questioning republican imperialism. As a result, a critical discourse on the issue did not take place amongst the grand public. Even later when Leopold Senghor began to explore *négritude*, in 1931 at the Paris Colonial International Exposition, a similar assimilation project continued as Herman Lebovics outlines:

> But as we have seen, it was above all an important early exercise in twentieth-century ontology [French self-validation in relation to the colonies]: an effort to promote a French identity as a colonial people, a people whose genius lay in assimilating peoples so that they both kept their *petit pays* and yet partook of the universal identity of a French-defined and French- administered humanity.[105]

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[104] Palermo, L. E. "Identity Under Construction: Representing the Colonies at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889." The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France. (Duke University Press: 2003)

[105] Lebovics, H. True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945. (Cornell Univ Pr, 1994) 93.

The effects of this assimilationist project no doubt had strong repercussions on the formation of French cultural forms as any form of contact with another culture would. However, within the world of music, the formation of *chanson* as a strictly French genre marked a continuation of the ideas first outlined within French assimilationist projects. Adeline Cordier in her dissertation tracks this continuation by looking at the ways in which Brel, Brassens and Ferré were assimilated into French national discourse using the framework that Lebovic outlines of *petit pays* vs the French; casting the three singers as part of the French province, who came to Paris and "fought to conquer the capital."[106] The attraction of this story in each of these artists' mythologies lay in its ability to "satisfy the post-war attraction to regional and rural culture while at the same time confirming that the national culture was focused almost exclusively on Paris".[107] As such, each artist represented the top of French metropolitan assimilation projects, at the same time that these same projects were failing abroad.

By 1969 when *le Métèque* came out, it had already been seven years since the end of the Algerian war; eleven years since Guinea declared its independence; and finally, along came Moustaki to announce the presence of *métèques* in French *chanson.* In the face of such calls to assimilate, Moustaki instead celebrated his right to not assimilate, not only musically but also physically as well by wearing a beard instead of staying clean-shaven as many other *chansonniers* of the day. Moustaki's statement, not only questioned the basic presumptions of *chanson,* but also those of assimilation projects in France.

[106] Cordier 250.
[107] Ibid 252.

Subsequent remixes of *le Métèque* have maintained and expanded this political stance vis-à-vis the state and its assimilation policies. In 2006, one year after famous riots responded the accidental electrocution of Zyed Benna and Bouna Traore who were fleeing a police identity check, hip-hop artists Rocé and Joey Starr each released two separate remixes of Moustaki's song.[108] In each song the political engagement introduced by Moustaki in 1969 is revisited to account for the increased presence of ethnic minorities from former French colonies. However, instead of simply engaging with the word *métèque* to announce their presence in the music scene, both artists instead utilize the word to traverse through multiple sites of memory:

(1) French assimilation policies and the constant demand to integrate into the *métropole*
(2) the designation of non-autochthone citizenry of France as a *métèque*
(3) the original statement made by Moustaki in his presentation into the world of *chanson*.

Following the 2005 riots in France, in an article titled "France's Burning Issue: Understanding the Urban Riots of November 2005," Raphaël Canet, Laurent Pech, and Maura Stewart stated that:

> These riots should be interpreted as the manifest evidence that most of the frustrated young men feel entirely French and that they simply want to be accepted by the Nation, and more prosaically, and to be part of a modern consumerist society. Their frustration and anger is comprehensible when faced with the unfulfilled promise of socio- economic integration.[109]

Although both artists emphasize their French citizenry while still retaining the word *métèque* to describe their experience, they each deploy the word with slightly different meanings, shifting from its usage to designate non-autochthonous citizen highlighted

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[108] Thomas Crampton. "Behind the Furor, the Last Moments of Two Youths." *The New York Times* (7 Nov. 2005)
[109] R. Canet, L. Pech, and M. Stewart. "France's Burning Issue: Understanding the Urban Riots of November 2005." SSN (December 2008) 3.

throughout this thesis to using the term as a way of affirming the diversity of French citizens. Thus, rather than the keeping the words strictly pejorative connation, Rocé and Joey Starr's usage of *métèque* moves the word away from the connotation of an "undesirable foreigner" to one that accounts for a plurality of what it means to be a French citizen. As a result, they question the basis of French assimilation projects that assume the need to *make* French citizens.

Remaking a Classic: Rocé and Joey Starr take on *chanson*

First let's take a look at Rocé's remake of *le Métèque* on his album *Identité en Crescendo*. The album, a follow-up to his 2002 album *Top Départ*, situates Rocé as an intellectual French hip-hop artist wishing to mix the literature of *négritude* and the post-colonialism of Edward Said with the musical styles of Free Jazz.[110] At first finding it hard to find a production company willing to work with him, Rocé collected a supporting cast of legendary jazz artists such as Archie Stepp, Gonzales, and Jacques Coursil in order to build momentum for his project. Yet behind the artistic endeavor of the music, lay Rocé's attempts to directly engage with the political headlines of the day. As a review of the album for the French music blog *Mowno* highlights, right from the beginning of the album with the song "I sing France" "[Je chante la France"], Rocé enters into a political debate with then Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, and his remarks that those who do not like France should leave, by defending "the idea that France could change and that it's maybe not too surprising if it is seen as bad to sing la Marseillaise or Sardou." [111] In each track of the album, Rocé builds and expands on the idea of the need

[110] "Interview: Rocé." *Abcdr Du Son*. 30 Oct. 2006. Web. <www.abcdruduson.com>.
[111]"Review - Rocé - Identité En Crescendo." *Mowno*. 15 May 2006. Web. <www.mowno.com>.

for French society to recognize multiple identities, by challenging lingering calls for assimilation into a single French identity.

Like the first track of the album, the fourth track, "le Métèque" thrusts Rocé into a direct debate about the nature of French identities. The refrain of the song builds off of Moustaki's classic, yet modifies it in key places to reflect changes in the politics of immigration. The first major change comes in the noun phrase that starts off the refrain, moving from "my big-ass mouth of a *métèque*" to "my big-ass head of a *métèque*". This change emphasizes a re-recognition of how non-autochthonous citizens are recognized in France, from linguistic to visible 'outsiders.' No doubt, this line was meant to draw attention to the presence of racial categories in France, a subject long taboo in the Republic, and the role it has in how French citizens perceive themselves and others.[112] The next line of the refrain modifies Moustaki's original trilogy of "*métèque*, of a wandering Jew, of a Greek shephard" to "*métèque*, of a wandering Jew, of a Muslim". To complete the transformation of the song into a modern day call against the racist policies of the state, the first half of the refrain ends by contrasting perceived foreign identities to fixed ideas of "Frenchness" [my suspect identity card, of a black student, of a white rapper].

In listening to Rocé's version of "le Métèque" it is hard not to see the influence of *négritude* writers in the formation of his ideas on identity. Throughout the song the echoes of Aimé Cesaire, whose writing Rocé praises as being on par with Molière ["Je chante la France], forms the basis of his confrontation with fixed contemporary ideas of

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"l'idée qu'une France peut aussi se changer, et que ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard s'il est mal vu de chanter la Marseillaise ou du Sardou."

[112] In his book, *La Condition Noire* Pap Ndiaye further explores how racial categories have been perceived in France, and challenges the notion that they have no meaning in society, despite the fact that "races" do not exist (pg 34-46).

assimilated identity. With an acute ear one can hear Cesaire's pronouncement at the First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956, that "in the short run or in the long run, all colonization comes to mean the death of the civilization of the colonized society," when Rocé pronounces[113]:

> I affirm myself alone, far from the abyss of integration/
> that amputates me from my ancestors so that I'll slide without friction/
> To cut of my culture and my name is to re-enter in line again/
> It's assimilation and it's mutilation. [114]

Like Cesaire, Rocé affirms the cultural effects of political decisions, and thus regards assimilation projects as a way to pronounce the death of colonized culture. However, for Cesaire, this death of colonized culture does not lead one to have to choose between the "fidelity and backwardness" of one's own culture or the "progress and rupture" of the colonizer's; for him it is a "false alternative" and "life…does not recognize, does not accept this alternative"[115] Instead, the only way forward as Cesaire sees it is to advocate for cultural synthesis, "a synthesis that will deserve the name of culture, a synthesis that will be the reconciliation and surpassing of old and new."[116] This no doubt marks a big shift for Cesaire, who, as Brent Edward Hayes points out in his introduction to his translation of Cesaire's speech, advocated that Martinique move from a colony to oversees department and supported France's assimilation policies.[117]

Exactly fifty years later, Rocé announces that while this synthesis has been achieved among post-colonial populations in France, its recognition on a national level has not:

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[113] Césaire, A. "Culture and Colonization." Social Text 28.2 103 (2010) 133.
[114] "Je m'affirme seul, loin de l'entonnoir intégration/ Qui m'amputerai de mes ancêtres pour que je glisse sans frottement / Détacher ma culture et mon nom pour rentrer dans l'rang / C'est l'assimilation et c'est de la mutilation
[115] Cesaire 141
[116] Cesaire 142
[117] B.H Edwards. "Introduction: Cesaire in 1956." Social Text 28.2 103 (2010) 1.

> To have to integrate in a country that is already yours/
> it's to do nothing but run in circles, and thus keep a shitty status/
> When I can't separate the cultures that have made me one/
> to make me remove a part is to remove all of my humanity/ [118]

Within this verse we can see that Rocé assumes the synthesis that Aimé Cesaire once proposed. He also affirms the analysis given earlier of the 2005 riots, and rather than arguing for the need to integrate into the country, he questions the call to integrate into a country one already feels well integrated into, by beginning with the assumption that he is already French. As such, he interrogates the failure of France to notice how well he has assimilated into French society, especially on the level of language, in addition to its failure to allow him to fully integrate into French society on the basis of ethnicity. As Yazid and Yacine Sabeg point out, "in continually linking young people born in France to the migration of their parents, tying them constantly to their origins, France keeps these citizens in a non-native status."[119] Thus, while Rocé might self-identify himself as French, albeit a citizen made of multiple cultures, the impossible requirement of French society for him to efface his ethnicity for full integration marks the way in which France refuses to acknowledge the possibility of a synthesis identity. As such the use of the word *métèque* in the refrain of the song reflects this multiple synthesis of cultures that challenges the notion of a unified French identity into which immigrant groups must blend into indistinguishably. With a suspect identity card, Rocé affirms a Jewish, Muslim, black, white identity that challenges any strict notion of what a French citizen *ought* to look like, along with notions of the racial and ethnic makeup of the French.

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[118] "Et devoir s'intégrer à un pays qui est déjà le siens / C'est flairer, ce mordre la queue, donc garder un statut de chien. / Quand je ne peux séparer les cultures qui m'ont faites un/ M'en retire une partie c'est ôter tout l'être humain

[119] Qtd. in Danielle Marx-Scouras *La France De Zebda: 1981-2004, Faire De La Musique Un Acte Politique*. (Paris: Autrement, 2005) 139.

For Joey Starr – whose own version of "le Métèque" came out six months after Rocé – a critique of French assimilation policies should come from affirming ones own Frenchness (no matter how much it differs from the perceived normal of a white, Catholic citizen), rather than affirming a synthesis of cultures; which as we will see took a strong political focus in the lead up to France's 2007 election season. Unlike Rocé who raps the refrain of "le Métèque," Joey Starr samples the first line of Moustaki's song, using it at the beginning of each verse and then rapping after. The effect of the sample not only reminds the listener of the original song by Moustaki, but also points to a larger effect of the song for Joey Starr – his placement as a new artist of *chanson*.

By far the most anticipated Hip-Hop album of 2006 in France, Joey Starr's *Gare au Jaguarr*, on which the song "le Métèque" appeared as its first single, marked a watershed in the rappers career. For the former "bad boy" of the group Nique Ta Mère (NTM or Fuck Your Mother in English), the arrival of his new album sent shockwaves through the world of French Hip Hop, and threw him back in the spotlight as one of France's most politically engaged rappers. Yet while it was widely praised for the variety of styles employed, the album immediately generated controversy after George Brassens' family refused the rapper's request to use his song "Gorrille" for a remix. Nevertheless, through the use of the song "le Métèque" Joey Starr replicated the same effect that using Brassens' song would have achieved. If Moustaki was able to critically question what it means to be a *chansonnier* with his introduction into the world of *chanson*, then Joey Starr, who was already well known to French audiences at the time, sought to cement his placement in the development of *chanson* vis-à-vis the legends of the French genre. This move not only sought to add ethnic diversity to the repertoire of *chanson*, but also

introduce the idea that French Hip Hop belonged in the Pantheon of French cultural production as well.

As such, Joey Starr affirms his Frenchness not by trying to advocate for an identity synthesis, but rather through placing himself lyrically and visually as the heritor of the poetic tradition of other former *métèque chansonniers* – albeit with a much more controversial political engagement. This can be seen in the music video for the song "le Métèque" which not only auditorily places Joey Starr in relation to George Moustaki, but also visually represents him as a modern day reincarnation of Jacques Brel, a very different look for Starr who usually dresses in a Hip Hop fashion (see Figure 1).

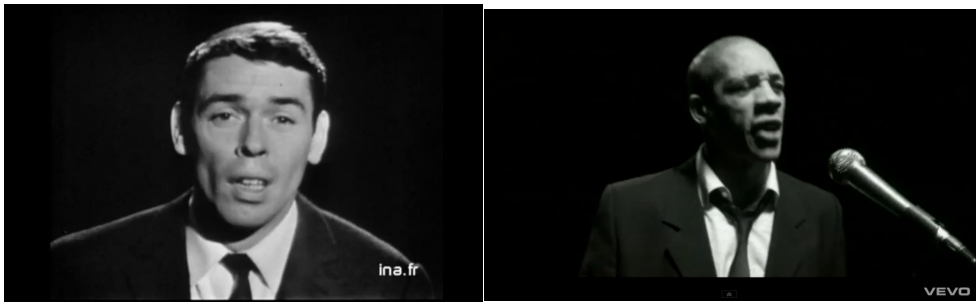

Figure 1: Jacques Brel singing "Les Vieux," 1964; Joey Starr's music video for "le Métèque," 2006

There are two major implications of this rhetorical move by Joey Starr: (1) it recalls the reaction to Moustaki's original version of the song by situating it as a piece of *chanson* that nevertheless celebrates the *métèque* qualities of the genre; and (2) it moves Joey Starr into uncharted territory as a French rapper, asserting that he is as culturally relevant as one of the biggest stars of French *chanson*, who happened to be Belgian, while still maintaining an air that allowed both Brel and later Starr to be embraced as fully French, despite their perceived outsider status early in their careers. As a review of his concert at the famed Olympia in Paris in 2007 claimed, with this new album and new style of

performance, Joey Star "was from now on a complete artist."[120] Indeed, even Borowice in his article on *métèque* chansonniers includes Joey Starr amongst a list of elite *chanson* artists.

It is possible that one can read Joey Starr's transformation into a Hip-Hop *chanson* artist par excellence via Brel, as the culmination of a long process whereby he finally assimilated nicely into French society. However, such a reading would miss the way in which Joey Starr's transformation into a *chanson* artist mirrored a greater political engagement that he was involved with at the time of the album's release. For at the same time that Joey Starr was in the process of transforming himself as an artist, he underwent a transformation as a citizen.

Following the riots of 2005, Joey Starr recognized the need to have a greater direct impact on the politics of France, moving from the "voice of the ghetto" to registering to vote for the first time with his partner Leila Dixmier. At the same time, with the actor Jamel Debbouze and the politician Olivier Besancenot, Joey Starr created the organization Devoirs de Mémoires (DDM) in order to "fight against discrimination, while removing the taboos of history."[121] Then, recognizing the need to calm the tension lingering in the Parisian suburbs following the riots, Joey Starr and Jamel Debbouze held a town-hall meeting in Clichy-sous-bois in order to encourage the youth to vote, a population whose presence is often missing at the polls on election day. As Stéphan Pocrain, a member of DDM, stated in regards to Starr's presence, he represents "a generation of young French urban and multicultural citizens who thought for a longtime that politicians weren't that interesting (or weren't hip enough) and have discovered

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[120] Chachin, Oliver. "JoeyStarr Live à L'Olympia." *RFI*. 19 Feb. 2007. Web. <www.rfimusique.com>.
[121] Penicaut, Nicole. "Un Collectif Contre L'amnésie." *La Liberation*. 26 Nov. 2005. Web. <www.liberation.fr>.

today a taste for public debate with a true sense of indignation." [122] In some ways, Joey Starr's actions mirror those of Zebda earlier in the decade in Toulouse, who sought to encourage the local youth to get involved in politics.[123] However, unlike Zebda who had a rather positive image, Joey Starr with his multiple arrests and prison sentences could have easily been written off as far from the type of citizen one wants to promote as a good role model for youth. In fact, this was the response of Nicolas Sarkozy to Starr's political engagement in the lead up to the 2007 elections, stating that he had nothing to learn from Joey Starr.[124] With his direct engagement with political figures of the day, Starr announced the need for French society to fully recognize and accept the diversity of its population in order to work together for a political future that creates bridges for an "effective social mix" as he states in editorial written for *La Liberation*, in October 2006. As such Joey Starr takes French citizenship to be an a priori assumption – especially for the myriad of ethnic citizens who have citizenship through birth – rather than the specific goal of Republican ideals, and instead pushes for French society to recognize the differences between citizens and then work together based off of them. This also represents a shift in the definition of *métèque* that Joey Starr advocates in his song, which he sees as representative of the diversity and differences of French citizens. One can see this in the concerts he gave in 2006-7 following the release of his album where he often told the audience, "Say it loud for the people at Place Beauvau (the French president's residence) that there is a *métèque* that sleeps in each one of us."[125]

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[122] Ono-dit-biot, Christophe. "Joey Starr à La Barre." *Le Point*. 09 Feb. 2006. Web. <www.lepoint.fr>.
[123] For more information about this, please refer to Danielle Marx-Scouras's book *La France de Zebda 1981-2004: Faire de la musique un acte politique,* especially chapter Chapter 3: La Politique.
[124] Ono-dit-biot.
[125] Cachin "Joey Star live"

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have tried to highlight the presence and shifts in meanings of the word *métèque* in the later half of the twentieth century by looking at its transformation through music, specifically *chanson*. Through briefly analyzing the creation of a strictly French genre of music founded on the idea of a continuous history since the Troubadours, I have tried to show the ways in which cultural understandings are often tied to strong political forces. For the power of *chanson* in creating the ideal French musical artists comes directly from its relation to assimilation policies that often regarded artists of non-autochthonous backgrounds as needing to find a way to break into the myth of the French artist. However, with the arrival George Moustaki's song "le Métèque," traditional conceptions of what it meant to be a chanson artist were shattered as he opened the door to discuss the "foreign" backgrounds of other artists. For Rocé the word highlights the synthesis of an identity made up of multiple cultures. For Joey Starr, the word symbolizes a French identity that that celebrates its diversity. Yet for both, the old definition of what it means to integrate into French society is enlarged to account for a new range of options of what it means to be French.

Today, the continued failure of the old Republican model for the integration of ethnic minorities can be seen in a report issued in January of this year by the *Haut conseil à l'intégration* [High Council on Integration] on the challenges of integration in the French school system delivered to the Prime Minister, Francois Fillon.[126] This report, which an editorial on the news blog Rue 89 rightly deplores as full of apocalyptic

[126] France. Haut Conseil à L'intégration. *Les Défis De L'intégration à L'école Et Recommandations Du Haut Conseil à L'intégration Au Premier Ministre Relatives à L'expression Religieuse Dans Les Espaces Publics De La République*. Jan. 2011. Web. <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/>.

theories of immigration, illustrates the ways in which the French government continues to fail to seriously tackle the issue without resulting to outdated models of a France without ethnic distinctions.[127] In the face of such failures are the songs of Moustaki, Rocé and Joey Starr who each tackle questions of integration and assimilation in France by recognizing and affirming their own placement in French society as *métèques*. As such, it seems that if France is going to effectively tackle the issue of integration, it would do well by beginning to recognize its non-autochthone citizens, or *métèques*, and their contributions to the fabric of French society.

[127] Girard, Bernard. "Ecole Et Immigration : Le Rapport Douteux Du Haut Conseil à L'intégration | Rue89." *Site D'information Et De Débat Sur L'actualité, Indépendant Et Participatif*. 25 Feb. 2011. Web. <http://www.rue89.com/>.

Conclusion

On May 2, 1990 with National Front (NF) leader Jean-Marie Le Pen proudly watching from the balcony of the National Assembly, Mme. Marie-France Stirbois (NF) pronounced that the Gayssot law, which sought to ban racist and anti-Semitic discourse in France, was itself a "racist anti-French" law.[128] Pierre Arpaillange, the *Garde des Sceaux*, later responded that the racism pronounced by groups such as the National Front, is "not an opinion, but an aggression".[129] Yet for Mme. Stirbois, the problem with the Gayssot law was that it seemed to be drafted for the National Front, whom she saw as defending the heritage of the French. As the sole representative of the National Front in the Assembly, Mme. Stirbois stated that she felt "obligated to defend the rights of the French alone".[130]

When Mme. Stirbois took the floor of the National Assembly that day, she didn't defend the National Front on the basis of its own merit, but rather through reading and quoting Greek philosophers who she felt would be banned under the law's statutes.[131] Pronouncing proudly that "we have a culture behind us," she then linked France's current democracy to Greek democracy. Yet the purpose of this association was not to talk about how the French are the direct descendents of Greek culture – a common trope for the National Front – but rather to prove that banning discourse critical of foreigners was equivalent to banning the foundations of democracy. In order to prove her point, Mme.

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[128] Journal Officiel 3 May 1990, 902.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid 908.
[131] For example, Mme. Stirbois began by quoting the following passage by Aristotle, taken from his politics Book V: "Another cause of revolution is difference of races which do not at once acquire a common spirit; for a state is not the growth of a day, any more than it grows out of a multitude brought together by accident. Hence the reception of strangers in colonies, either at the time of their foundation or afterwards, has generally produced revolution" (Translation by Benjamin Jowett).

Stirbois gave a short history lesson to the National Assembly by way of discussing the role of foreigners in Athens, arguing that their substandard position was "discrimination, certainly, always discrimination" and that "discrimination between foreigners and citizens was necessary to defend the sovereignty of the city".[132] In her understanding based off of the work of the antiquity scholar Gustave Glotz, the Front National "has not invented discrimination, "rather it is inherent in our history, and finds its first expression with the daybreak of Heraclitus of Ephesus".[133] And finally, to conclude her historic Greek civic lesson, Mme. Stirbois stated that:

> Behind the shocking words of racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia of which you are afraid, you are in fact hiding a plan much more tortuous. It's the negation of the right to be French, and the will to dilute French people into a *melting-pot*. This deliberate plan to kill our heritage, to turn off at any price our way of being in the world while denying citizens their legitimate right to be proud to loudly call themselves French, touches the essence of our Constitution.

Later that evening on France 2, a reporter noted that throughout Mme. Stirbois's speech, Jean-Marie Le Pen kept his smile.

Where do we go from here?

In her analysis of Mme. Stirbois speech in the conclusion of her book on Athenian citizenship, *Born of the Earth*, the antiquity scholar Nicole Loraux notes that despite giving a long analysis of immigrants in Athens, "the word '*métèque*,' naturally recurrent in Glotz's technical treatment, has disappeared from the imitation" (138). Loraux then further conjectures that:

> I am willing to bet that its systematic application to Jews in the 1930s has made it embarrassing, to the point that even where it would be topical its use is avoided. An excessive precaution in the elimination of traces, reminding us that the National Front boasts of not being anti-Semitic (ibid).

[132] JO 909-910
[133] Ibid.

While the absence of the word *métèque* may be quite surprising, it doesn't mean that its presence was not felt throughout the speech. For by evoking the memory of Athens and its relationship to foreigners in her speech, Mme. Stirbois at once tied the *métèques* of Athens to the *métèques* of France. For historians of Greek antiquity, such as Loraux, the problem with linking Athenian Democracy to French Democracy is that it not only misrepresents the history of democracy in both countries, but it also misrepresents the history of Athenian *métèques*.[134] As Saber Mansouri said in his book exploring the lives of métèques who lived in ancient Greece,

> At the moment when we became expert contemporary citizens in the politics of representative democracy, at the moment when participative televisual democracy triumphs, at the moment when we confuse participative citizenship with consummation, we can clearly say that we are not Athenians, we are not Greek.[135]

I will take this argument a little bit further and state that the problem with Mme. Stirbois' speech is that it not only misrepresents the history of Athenian *métèques*, but also the history of French *métèques*. As we have seen over the course of the past few chapters, while the word's application to foreigners in the first half of the twentieth century was fraught with anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia and stigma, in recent years France's *métèques* have broken down barriers and shown how a plurality of cultures can live in France and still consider themselves to be French. When Joey Starr proudly proclaims at his concert "there's a *métèque* that sleeps in all of us," he gives a positive twist to the stigma that haunted Dario Asfar. When Rocé affirms a synthesized Algerian and French identity, he questions the xenophobia and anti-Semitism of de Villaine, who felt that Jews represented a geopolitical threat to the integrity of the French Republic and

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[134] Loraux, Nicole. *Born of the Earth: Myth and Politics in Athens*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000) 125-142.
[135] Mansouri, Saber. *Athènes Vue Pas Ses Métèques: Ve-IVe Siècle Av. J.-C.* (Paris: Tallandier, 2011) 153.

its "race". And when George Moustaki sings his *chanson* of a métèque, he challenges the notion that France was not already a *melting-pot* before the Gayssot law came into effect. As such, the real problem with the National Front's conception of history is that *they* are the ones who advocate a cultural amnesia of French "heritage".

At this critical moment it seems as if the stakes could not seem higher for a cultural amnesia. With the rise of Marine Le Pen to the top of the National Front in the past year, France's extreme right has advocated a general amnesia of its anti-Semitic and xenophobic past. Recently an article in *The Economist* stated that Ms. Le Pen's ambitions to "decontaminate" her party have begun by reshaping her argument that she is against "Islam" to being against "Islamification".[136] The effects of this shift could not be more dramatic in the polls, with Marine Le Pen leading the right as a potential candidate for the French presidency. [137] Yet as Ralph Schor highlights in an article titled "The French Far Right and Immigrants in Times of Crisis: The 1930s and the 1980s" the rhetoric of the extreme right in France has changed little over the twentieth century vis-à-vis France's immigrant populations – same argument, different formulation. Thus, while immigrant population might have changed drastically over the century, the incendiary rhetoric against them has not, and in both a similar appeal to the Greeks for providing precedence in how to run a democratic society. Yet, as Loraux and Mansouri have shown, when examined at a closer level, these appeals break down when discussing contemporary French society. As such, we would do well to not confuse Athens' *métèques* with France's foreigners, and risk forgetting the contributions of both at the same time.

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[136] "France's National Front: Le Pen, Mightier than the Sword? | The Economist." *The Economist*. 5 May 2011. Web. <http://www.economist.com/>.
[137] "Sondage : Marine Le Pen En Tête Du 1er Tour Dans Tous Les Cas De Figure." *Le Parisien*. 7 Mar. 2011. Web. <Leparisien.fr>

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